Nov. 18, 1991

THE NEW YORKER

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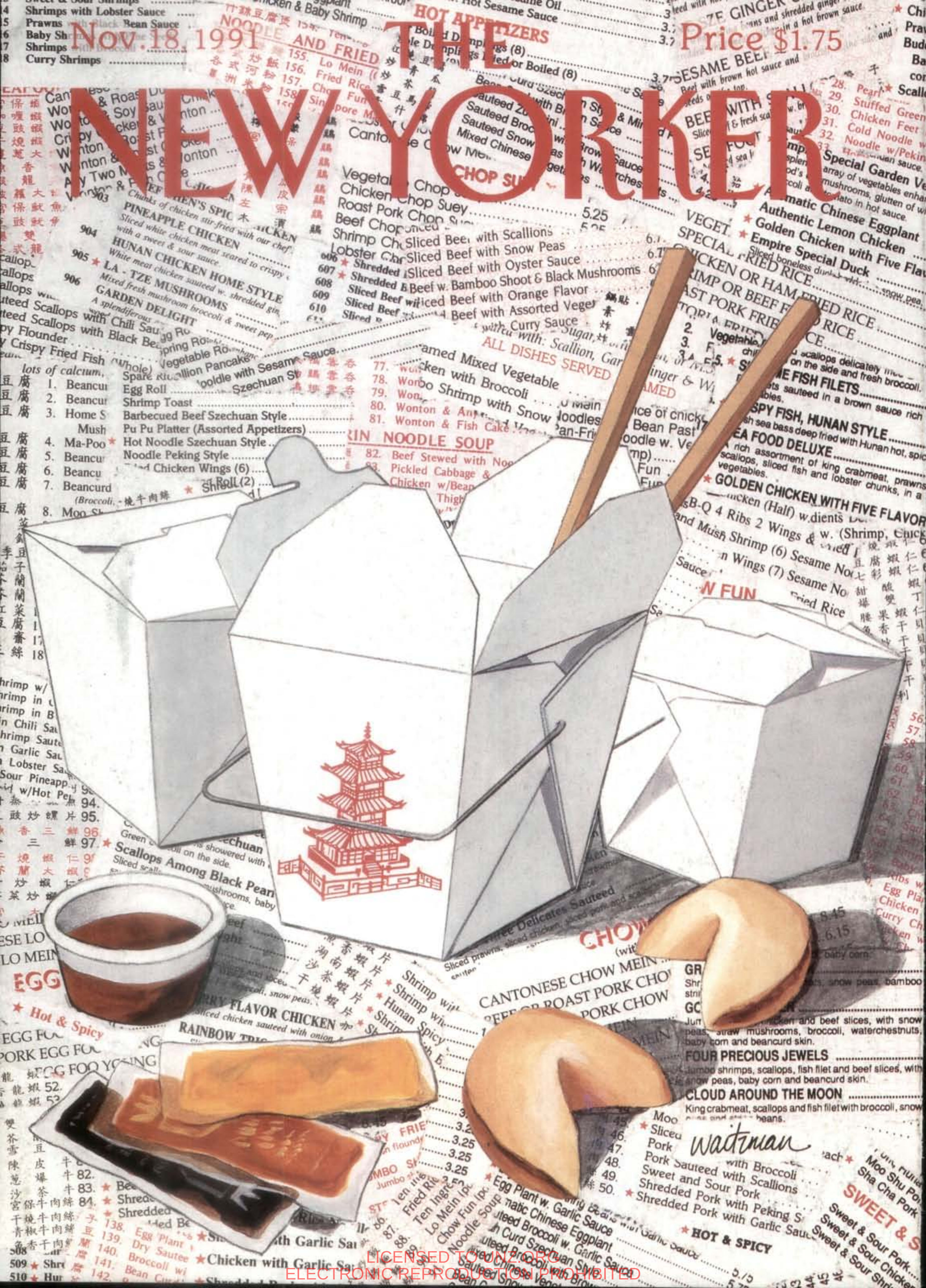
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80. Wonton & Ant
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THE NEW YORKER

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

LITERATURE loves a twinning: Thoreau and Emerson, Camus and Sartre, Sexton and Plath. The most significant such pairing of our own day may be that of Václav Havel, the playwright and President of Czechoslovakia, and Árpád Göncz, who is also both a playwright and the post-Wall President of a Central European country: Hungary. Despite the obvious similarities between the Czech and the Hungarian—the lifelong battles with Communist authorities, the years in prison during periods of political clampdown—Göncz remains the less familiar philosopher-king. This lower profile has perhaps less to do with the drabness of his official appointments (no Frank Zappas, in other words) than with the contained shape of his artistic reputation. Since his 1963 release from prison, where he taught himself English, Göncz has cultivated a literary career primarily in his own back yard, translating a veritable syllabus of American literature into Hungarian, as well as writing plays, essays, and fiction. None of his stage works have ever been produced in this country.

Before now, that is: the Riverside Shakespeare Company is presenting Göncz's "Iron Bars" through December 1. In a recent conversation, President Göncz told us that he wrote most of the play during a period of two or three months in the seventies and that he had to wait seven years for it to be published. The work is based on "a not outstandingly talented writer" Göncz had known in prison, someone whose poems, copied on toilet paper, were passed from hand to hand. Upon release, this writer had such difficulty coping with the world that he ended up institutionalized again, this time in a mental hospital. The theme of an artist adjusting to unwonted freedom has become an achingly familiar one over the past few years, but there is something ever-poignant about hearing it from a voice as authentic as Göncz's. Also something ironic, given the President's own adjustment to post-Communist liberty: his duties as head of state have, for the moment, left him with no time to exercise his own artistic freedom. "I may not be the best Hungarian writer right now," he says, "but I am certainly the greatest Hungarian signer."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Bluebeard—The Ridiculous Theatrical Company proffers Charles Ludlam's 1970 play. Previews Nov. 12-13. Opens Nov. 14 at 8. (Charles Ludlam, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

Finkel's Follies—A show billed as "a new American musical vaudeville," conceived by and starring Fyvush Finkel. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

Free Speech in America—"MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour" essayist Roger Rosenblatt in a

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17	18	19	20			

one-man show. Previews Nov. 13-16. Opens Nov. 17 at 3. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

From the Mississippi Delta—An autobiographical play by Endesha Ida Mae Holland. With Cheryl Lynn Bruce, Sybil Walker, and Jacqueline Williams; directed by Jonathan Wilson. Opens Nov. 11 at 7. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

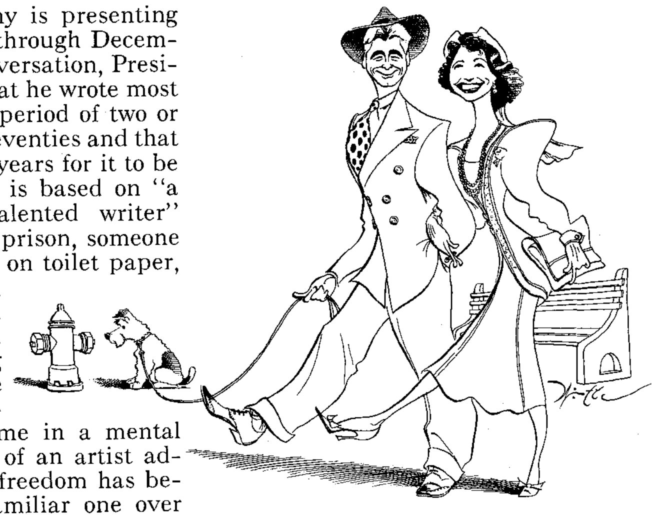
I Can't Stop Screaming—A play written by and starring Andy Halliday. Previews Nov. 14-17. Opens Nov. 20 at 8. (Theatre at 224 Waverly Pl. 279-4200.)

Marvin's Room—A play by Scott McPherson, featuring Lisa Emery and Laura Esterman. Previews begin Nov. 15. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Nick & Nora—Barry Bostwick and Joanna Gleason are Nick and Nora Charles in this musical murder mystery—inspired by Dashiell Hammett's "Thin Man" characters—by Arthur Laurents (book), Charles Strouse (score), and Richard Maltby, Jr. (lyrics). Mr. Laurents directed. Also with Christine Baranski and Chris Sarandon. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Night Dance—A play by Reynolds Price, with Alexandra Styron. Opens Nov. 14 at 8, and runs through Dec. 1. (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. 865-1868.)

Pericles—Campbell Scott has the title role in the nineteenth play in the Shakespeare Marathon. Michael Greif directed. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)



Barry Bostwick and Joanna Gleason in "Nick & Nora"

Rags—Ann Crumb, Steven Keats, and Crista Moore star in this revised version of the 1986 musical by Charles Strouse, Stephen Schwartz, and Joseph Stein. Presented by the American Jewish Theatre. In previews. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

Village Light Opera Group—Presenting a short engagement of Gilbert and Sullivan's **PATIENCE.** Opens Nov. 16 at 8, and runs through Nov. 24. (Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 W. 27th St. 279-4200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

And the World Goes 'Round: The Kander & Ebb Musical—A musical revue, with a five-member cast that includes Karen Ziémba. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Approximating Mother—A play by Kathleen Tolan, with Deirdre O'Connell, Mia Dillon, and Tonya Pinkins. Presented by the Women's Project. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 873-3767. Closes Nov. 24.)

The Baby Dance—Jane Anderson's humorous, affecting play about two couples—Wanda and Al, of Louisiana, who are about to have a child, and Rachel and her husband, of Southern California, who plan to adopt it. The script is composed of sudden sympathy and petty misunderstandings, and three of the performances, under Jenny Sullivan's direction, are exceptional: Linda Purl and Stephanie Zimbalist, as the wives, and Richard Lineback, as Al; he could be a young Henry Fonda. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/28/91.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

Beau Jest—A comedy by James Sherman, which was originally done last year, in Chicago. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

Beggars in the House of Plenty—Though the hero of John Patrick Shanley's eruptive satire, significantly named Johnny, is—man and boy—the victim of his Irish Catholic family, he is a resilient victim, which is more than can be said for most of his relatives. The action, under Mr. Shanley's direction, trips along in a comic, inventive manner until, weighed down by bitterness, it turns bleak. Loren Dean is fine as Johnny, as are Dana Ivey, Daniel von Bargen, and Jon Tenney as relatives. (11/4/91) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes Dec. 1.)

Bon Appétit!—Jean Stapleton in two short operas by Lee Hoiby. The first is a musical staging of Ruth Draper's monologue "The Italian Lesson"; the second is a setting of a Julia Child cooking lesson. Performed in repertory with "Cabaret Verboten." (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

Breaking Legs—The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Ronald Maccone, Nick Wyman, and, above all, Susan Giosa as the daughter who spins the plot. Karen Valentine fills in for Ms. Giosa Nov. 19-24. (6/3/91) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Cabaret Verboten—John Rubinstein, Jane Lanier, Mark Nelson, and Betsy Joslyn perform songs and sketches from Germany's Weimar era. Jeremy Lawrence conceived the show, which is running in repertory with "Bon Appétit!" (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Nov. 24.)

Cole and Coward: Julie Wilson with William Roy—Porter and Noël, by the singer and her accompanist. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

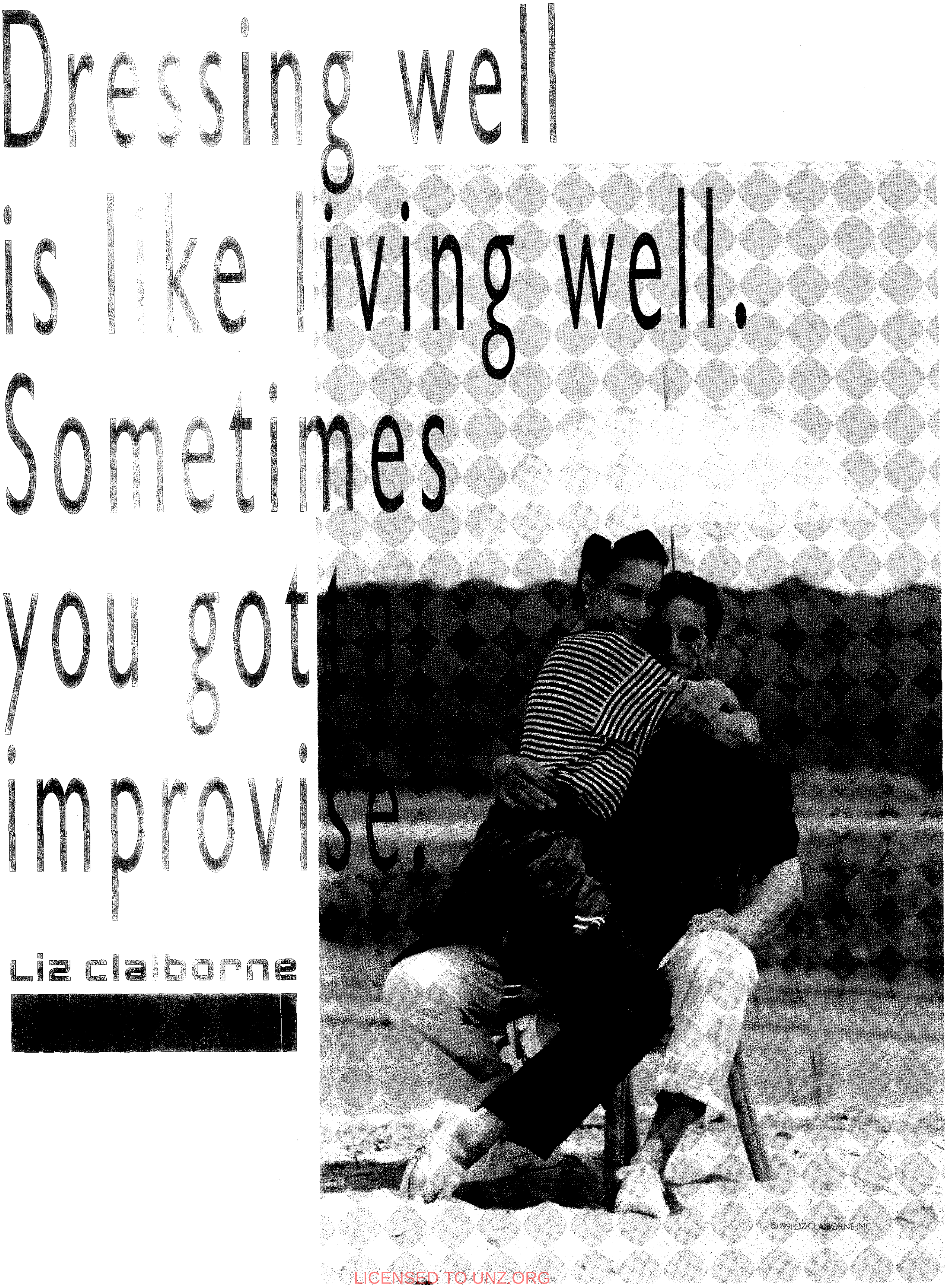
Dancing at Lughnasa—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical, or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Distant Fires—The six characters are construction workers on the job, and what plot there is concerns two of them—one b. and the other w.—who are competing for an opening in the union. The play, by Kevin Heelan, is somewhat short on substance, but is performed so naturalistically that it is hard to imagine the actors—they include Giancarlo Esposito, Todd Weeks, and Jordan Lage—without their hard hats. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 645-8755. Closes Dec. 1.)

The Dressing Room—The first play of Pan Asian Rep's season is by the Japanese dramatist Kunio Shimizu. Adapted by Chiori Miyagawa and based on the translation by John K. Gillespie. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes Nov. 30.)

The Good Times Are Killing Me—The cartoonist Lynda Barry devised this memory play of words and pop tunes about a racially mixed neighborhood. At the heart of it is the friendship of two little girls, one white, the other black, who are delightfully portrayed by Angela Goethals and Chandra Wilson. The undercurrent of serious comment on race doesn't add much, but every humorous scene scores a bull's-eye. Mark Brokaw directed. (5/6/91) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. Closes Nov. 24.)

The Homecoming—This production, the Roundabout's Broadway début, literally revives Harold Pinter's ironic, puzzling, funny, riveting, and altogether masterful play about a


Dressing well
is like living well.
Sometimes
you gotta
improvise.
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professor who returns from America, with his wife, to his horrible family in London. The acting throughout is worthy of the script. Roy Dotrice plays the father of the family; Lindsay Crouse is the wife; Daniel Gerroll is a brother who pimps for a living; and Jonathan Hogan is the professor. Also with John Horton and Reed Diamond. (11/11/91) (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

In the Jungle of Cities—A Mabou Mines–New York Shakespeare Festival production of Brecht's play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Nov. 24.)

Iron Bars—A play by Árpád Göncz, the President of Hungary. Translated by Katharina M. and Christopher C. Wilson. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Closes Dec. 1.)

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting two plays in rotating repertory: **the skin of our teeth,** by Thornton Wilder (through Nov. 22), and **geneva,** by George Bernard Shaw (through Dec. 6). (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Lips Together, Teeth Apart—Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Hillary Bailey Smith, Jonathan Hadary, Roxanne Hart, and Anthony Heald; directed by John Tillinger. (7/8/91) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

Miss Saigon—Oh, the horror! The horror! (4/29/91) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

No Cure for Cancer—Denis Leary's one-man show, which received its première at last summer's Edinburgh Festival. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226. Closes Dec. 1.)

On Borrowed Time—A first-rate revival of Paul Osborn's charming fantasy, which was originally done here in 1938. George C. Scott is Gramps; Teresa Wright is his wife; Matthew Porac is his little grandson; and Nathan Lane is Death, whom he traps in an apple tree. All of them are splendid. Mr. Scott directed. (10/21/91) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

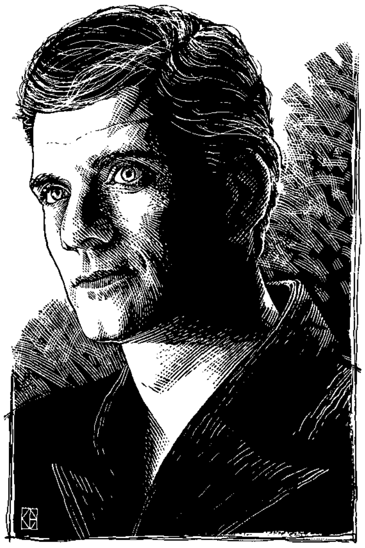
Pageant—A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)

Park Your Car in Harvard Yard—Jason Robards and Judith Ivey in a two-character play by Israel Horovitz. Directed by Zoe Caldwell. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Penn & Teller Rot in Hell—The dynamic duo are performing their repertoire of tricks Off Broadway. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

A Piece of My Heart—A play by Shirley Lauro, based on the 1986 book by Keith Walker. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 581-7907. Closes Nov. 24)

The Real Live Brady Bunch—Episodes from the acclaimed TV series, reënacted by the Annoyance Theatre, of Chicago. Something called "The Real Live Game Show" comes first. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)



Campbell Scott in "Pericles"

Return to the Forbidden Planet—Gabriel Barré, Julee Cruise, Robert McCormick, and Louis Tucci are all adorable in this light-minded entertainment, a London import that won the Laurence Olivier Award for best musical in a year when it might have gone to "Miss Saigon" (whose producer's indignation led to the creation of a new award category). The show—a patchwork of beloved pop songs stitched together with Shakespeareana—has almost nothing to do with the cult movie it is based on, and still less to do with "The Tempest." It is more than anything else an occasion to laugh a bit and rock out a lot. One wishes the writer-director, Bob Carlton, had not cluttered up the newly restored Variety Arts (and the production) with the trappings of a spaceship flight in which the audience is meant to take part. But, as one audience member was heard to remark, "Any show that could make Cameron Mackintosh that mad has something to be said for it." (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Secret Garden—This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (5/13/91) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Servy-n-Bernice 4Ever—A drama by Seth Zvi Rosenfeld, with Ron Eldard and Lisa Gay Hamilton. Terry Kinney directed. (Provincetown, 133 Macdougal St. 477-5048.)

Shmulnik's Waltz—A play by Allen Knee. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667. Closes Nov. 24.)

Song of Singapore—A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. Another problem: on a busy night the seating arrangements here can be extremely cramped. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)

The Trojan Women—Euripides' play, in a translation by Richmond Lattimore. Bella Jarret heads the cast; Shepard Sobel directed. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708.)

Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love—All is not well in Edmonton, Canada—that's the news in Brad Fraser's play about down-and-outers in one of Canada's provincial capitals. The script, which would have been passé in 1975, is full of desperate young people doing drugs, having sex, leaving telephone messages, committing gory crimes, making prophecies, and crying out in anguish. Tennis, anyone? (9/30/91) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

The White Rose—A play by Lillian Garrett-Groag kicks off the WPA Theatre's new season. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Nov. 17.)

The Will Rogers Follies—The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (5/13/91) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

LONG RUNS

cats: Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **city of angels:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.). . . **the fantasticks:** The longest-running long run turned thirty-one in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **forbidden broadway 1991½:** This revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the barbed lyrics. A holiday edition, "Forbidden Christmas," starts Nov. 19, and will continue through Jan. 5. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.). . . **forever plaid:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **grand hotel:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **lost in yonkers:** There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **les misérables:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **nunsense:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **once on this island:** An enchanting musical, set in the Caribbean, by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 1.). . . **perfect crime:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **the phantom of the opera:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 1.). . . **six degrees of separation:** You're best off knowing nothing about the John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright and the director Jerry Zaks. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. Kelly Bishop now has the lead. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

DANCE

A COUPLE of sticks, a wire or two, a wig, some stuffing, an old Halston dress, and a pair of high-heeled shoes. Put them all together, say "Fated to be mated," and there's Bernice, the doll-partner of your dreams—or at least of Bernard Cauchy's dreams. She's a real pro, always warmed up and "on," three or four hours a day, six days a week, forty-eight weeks of the year. They do everything: waltzes, tangos, rumbas, the Lindy, tap, tours jetés, slapstick routines. Bernice can show you all sorts of épaulement, and from time to time she cracks jokes with her movable jaw. (In the future, she may also bat her eyes.)

At the moment, the couple are tripping the light fantastic most days, from noon to 4 P.M., near the Columbus Circle subway station, but we caught up with them a couple of weeks ago, near the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Mr. Cauchy wore a violet tailcoat, black dress pants, specially cushioned sneakers, and a bandanna tied around his red hair. He stands about six feet tall; Bernice is a head shorter. He tied her feet to his ankles and suddenly we weren't watching a man jump around with a doll but two figures performing real dance

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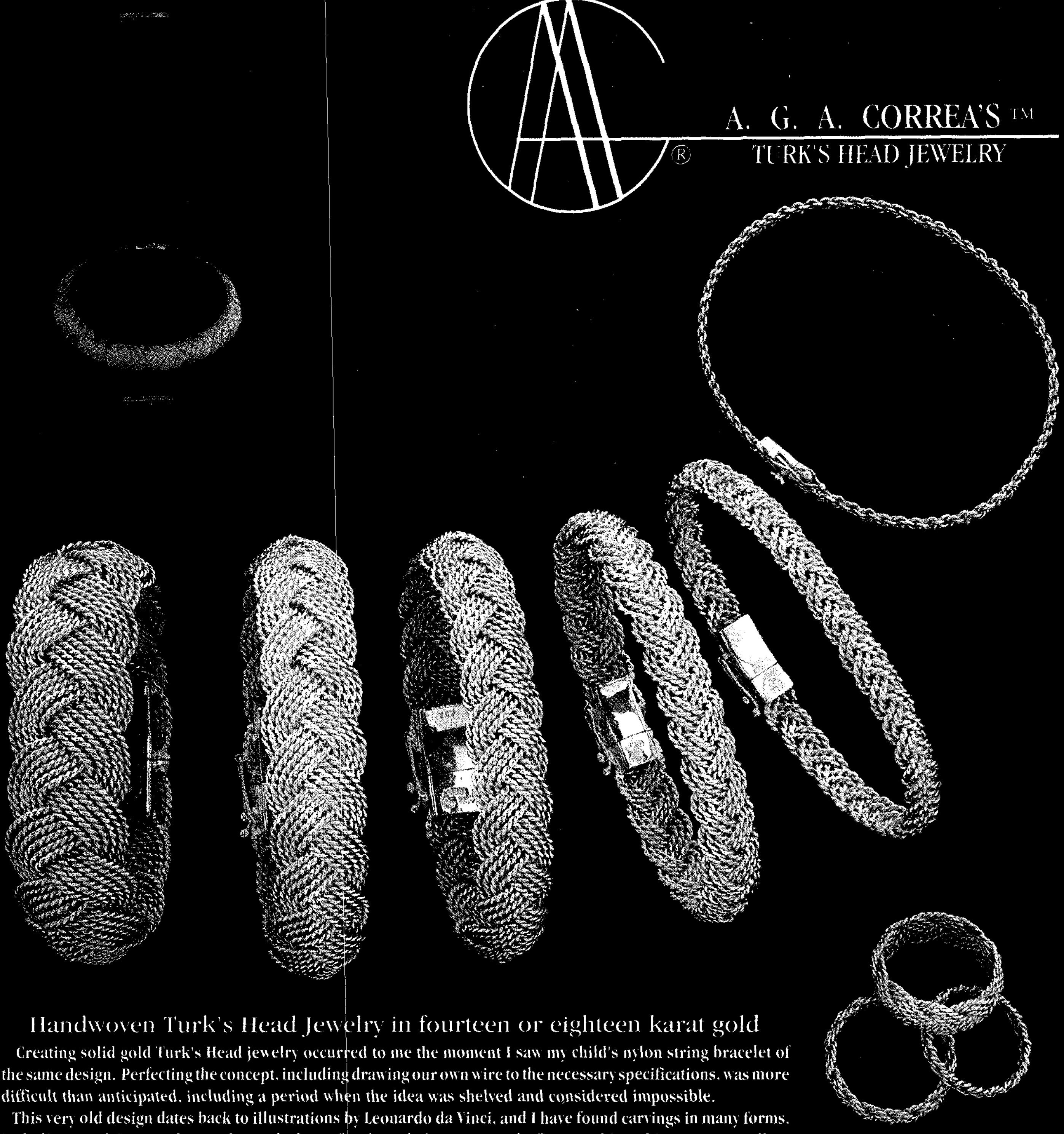

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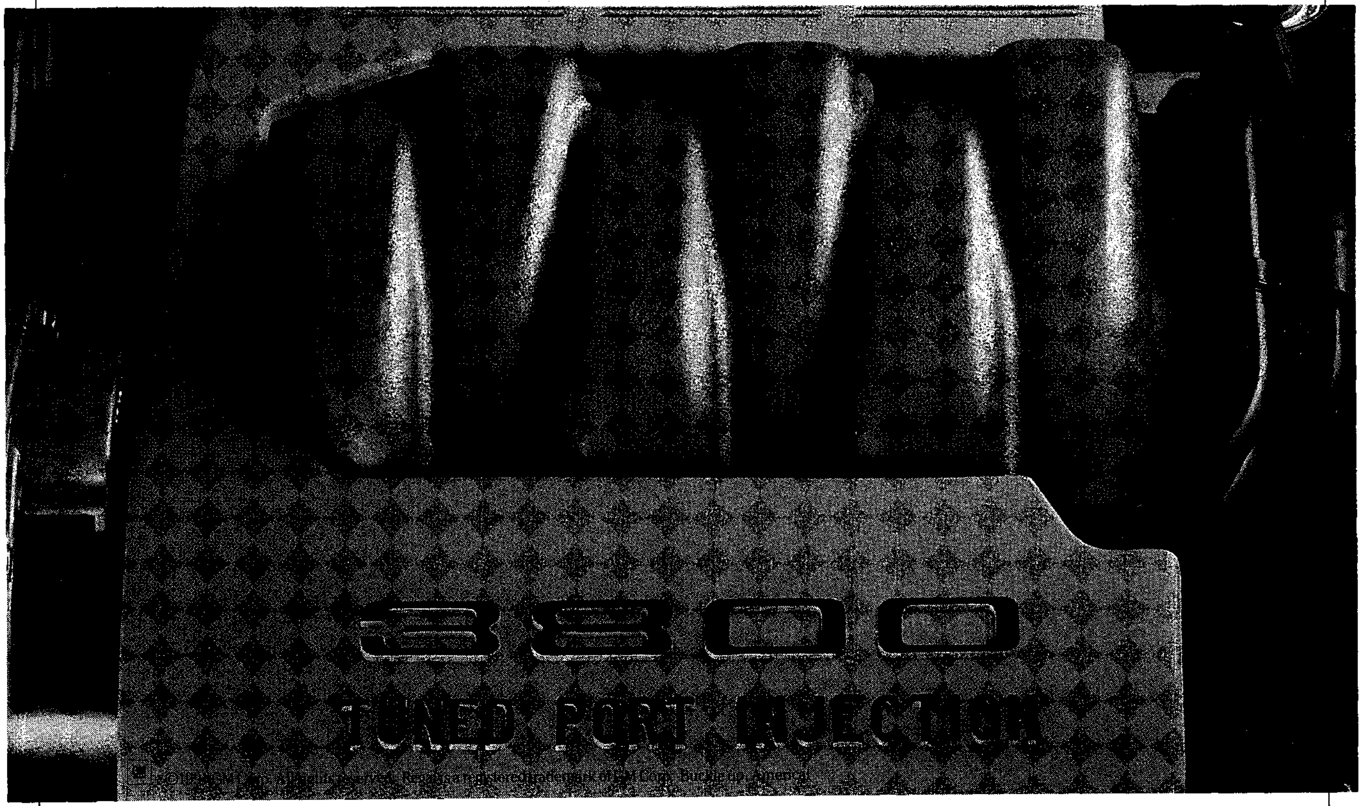

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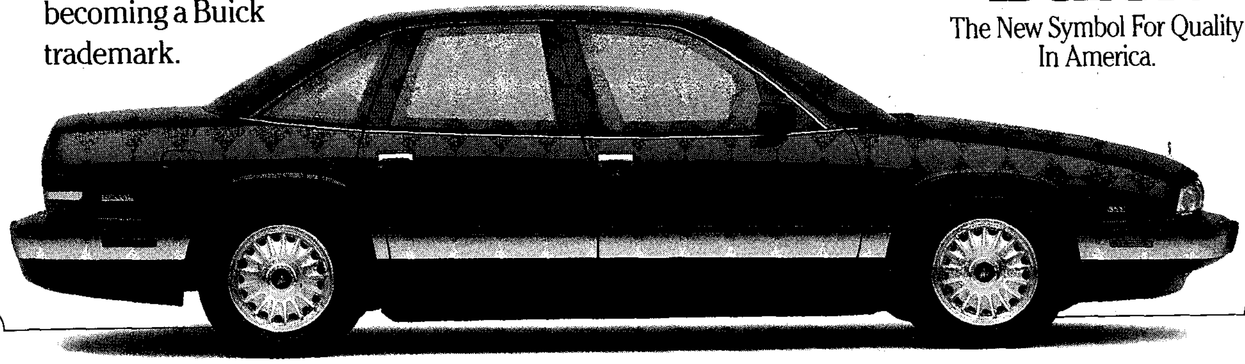

steps. They tapped to a tape of Mel Tormé singing a Fred Astaire medley, and swung for the full six minutes of "Sing, Sing, Sing." The dances were playful and fresh, and during a break we learned from Mr. Cauchy that they were improvised on the spot, with the exception of one or two key moves as touchstones. Even those are open to negotiation, though. As Mr. Cauchy puts it, "Hey, I'm free to change the act."

Mr. Cauchy told us that, between his native Quebec and his adopted New York, he has studied ballet, modern, jazz, tap, and a little bit of ballroom dancing. Bernice gets a new dress about every three months, and Mr. Cauchy doesn't dance in rain or snow, "because of her." For accompaniment, he often uses what he calls "campy music, Muzak kind of music"; for Christmas, he's planning routines to the Boston Pops and Strauss waltzes. "But I also do some good music sometimes," he added. "For instance, we'll dance to Basia, who's a Polish singer living in London, where she performs Latin jazz." We asked him what Basia was known for and he said, "Well, there's her great line: 'If Chopin had been born in Brazil, he would have written a samba.'"

New York City Ballet—Opening performances of the season, which will run through Feb. 23. Nov. 19 at 8: A benefit performance, including a preview of a new Peter Martins ballet. . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 8: "Episodes," "Poulenc Sonata," "Interplay," and "Western Symphony." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Joffrey Ballet—In an engagement of "The Nutcracker." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Nov. 14-15 and Nov. 19-20 at 7:30, and Nov. 16-17 at 2 and 7:30. Through Dec. 1.)

Toronto Dance Theatre—In four New York premières: "Fifteen Heterosexual Duets," "The Court of Lions," "Dreamsend," and "First Music." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 12-15 at 8, Nov. 16 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 17 at 2 and 7:30.)

Shobha Sharma—In a program of Bharata Natyam dance. (Uris Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 81st St. Nov. 17 at 2:30. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the performance.)

Jennifer Muller/The Works—Opening performances of a two-week engagement that will run through Dec. 1. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 19 at 8 and Nov. 20 at 7:30.)

NIGHT LIFE

"I DON'T think people are always flattered to find themselves characters in my songs," Billy Bragg told us the other day. "A woman once threw a cassette of mine off the Hammersmith Bridge into the River Thames."

If there were any justice in the world, someone would have fished that cassette out. Over the past eight years, the British singer has made a handful of indispensable albums, among them the Clash-influenced "Talking with the Taxman About Poetry," the reflective "Worker's Playtime," and, most recently, "Don't Try This at Home." Anyone who still thinks of Bragg as a sort of socialist novelty act—an ideologue with a hard Cockney accent and a scrappy electric guitar—is likely to be surprised by his latest effort. "Don't Try This at Home" is thoroughly eclectic. It's highlighted by "Sexuality," a blithe bit of pop that Bragg wrote with Johnny Marr, and "You Woke Up My Neighborhood," a wheeling, country-tinged number he wrote with Peter Buck, of R.E.M. The album is full of both childlike bliss and a Gulf War-induced melancholy and dread.

Bragg's work has always thrived on paradox. He's written a slew of strident songs like "Power in a Union," "Ideology," and "Help Save the Youth of America." He has even rewritten and recorded "L'Internationale," formerly the Communist Party anthem. But Bragg, who'll be at the Ritz on November 16, has also penned many extraordinarily frank and vulnerable variations on the fool-for-love theme. "I can be a bit pathetic," Bragg told us, laughing. "I have a genuine fear of rejection that shouldn't have a place in the life of a man whose job it is to go out in front of twenty-five hundred people and sing a song. An audience could reject me and I wouldn't care a shit, but somehow I'm more sure of my identity when I have a guitar strapped around my neck. I'm quite tongue-tied when it comes to starting relationships. I'm still a nervous, awkward fella. I've got a Jimmy Stewart kind of vibe, you know? But I figure better Jimmy Stewart than Rod Stewart."

TING CENTER

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**JEFF HARNAR** is at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room, through Nov. 16. Harnar is a young singer with a lot of presence: a big voice, a big smile, and a big, overtly theatrical manner. Tuesday through Saturday at nine-thirty, he is offering "The Warner Brothers Show Book." On Friday and Saturday at eleven-thirty, his program is titled "Gershwin's Hollywood." **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** begins an extended visit on Nov. 19. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that seems to bring out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A neat-as-a-pin music room on the edge of Chelsea, near the flower and fur markets. **LAURIE BEECHMAN**, a Broadway V.I.P. ("Annie," "Cats," and "Les Miz" are a few of her credits), begins a run here on Nov. 12. The title of the program, "Listen to My Heart," is also the title of Ms. Beechman's recently released album, and the playlists of both are a mishmash of Broadway fare, standards, and contemporary pop. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen.

Bitter End, 149 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—For the price of a drink or two, you can catch a handful of bands here any night of the week. (The cover charge is mostly a formality—walk along Bleecker Street and you're sure to have a free pass handed to you.) In the old days, as a mural behind the bar attests, the club hosted the likes of Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, and Joni Mitchell. Now you're not likely to recognize anyone onstage unless you went to high school with them. Music from eight Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. Guitarist and composer **LARRY CARLTON** can be found here Nov. 12-17; the **JOE ZAWINUL SYNDICATE** commences work on Nov. 19. First set at nine. Dining

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar in the heart of N.Y.U. country. It's advisable to get all your talking done between sets, because once the first chord is struck the audience here—with a little help from the management—becomes as quiet as a church congregation. **DONALD HARRISON, STEPHEN SCOTT, DWAYNE BURNO,** and **YORON ISRAEL** hold forth through Nov. 17. Beginning on Nov. 18 the club belongs to the **LARRY WILLIS** trio. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and **BOBBY SHORT**—now in his twenty-fourth year here. Mr. Short, who is accompanied by a bassist and a drummer, commands the room like a jovial headmaster. He has trouble sitting still: he keeps rising from the piano bench to snap his fingers, emphasize a lyric, or lean forward and address the audience. His selections are uniformly witty and sly—Porter is a great favorite—and his own patter rises to the same standard. "I use a lot of French," he'll say with his crisp, haughty diction, "because I find that it makes the cover charge more digestible." Sets at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans' Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—On most nights of the week, this club attracts a scruffy leather-and-lace crowd, but Sundays belong to the Swing Dance Society, whose passion is the Lindy Hop, a dance named after Charles Lindbergh. The dancers are young and old, graceful and flat-footed; the drink of choice is the Swing Dance Punch. Nov. 17 is ceded to **BIG SWING.** Music from eight to midnight.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A recently inaugurated club that promises to "feature only Chicago-area blues artists working with their regular Chicago blues bands." This concept may not appeal to New York blues artists, but it affords local blues aficionados a chance to hear what they've been missing. **SON SEALS** and his band will perform Nov. 15-16. The Zora Young band plays Nov. 13-14 and the Buster Benton band occupies the stand Nov. 17-18. Music begins after nine.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—Jazz clubs aren't always known for their romantic atmosphere, but Condon's earns higher marks than most. It's a low-ceilinged basement establishment, with lemon walls and abundant candlelight. The **ANDREW CYRILLE** quintet is in action Nov. 12-17; **VON FREEMAN'S** quartet begins work on Nov. 19. Monday nights belong to the **CLIFFORD JORDAN** big band. Music after nine.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy;

Billy Bragg at the Ritz

nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. **ASTRUD GILBERTO** will be here for two weeks, beginning Nov. 12. Ms. Gilberto, who rose to fame with her 1963 rendition of “Girl from Ipanema,” has a cool, vibratoless voice and a graceful, reflective stage manner. The low-key sambas and bossa-novas that she and her band cook up may remind you of Bacharachesque soundtracks from sixties movies; in fact, you may find yourself recalling montages of mod young lovers running in the rain, driving in Beetles, rolling in the grass. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, a menu full of items like bangers and mash, and a piano. Knickerbocker's is an airy, good-spirited place and, while music often takes a back seat to conversation, some able piano-and-bass teams turn up regularly. Pianist **JUDY CARMICHAEL** and saxophonist **MIKE HASHIM** claim Nov. 13-16. Music from nine-forty-five.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. The rocking-blues guitarist and harmonica player **CLARENCE (GATEMOUTH) BROWN** performs on Nov. 14. Sets from nine-fifteen, except on Sundays, when shows begin at eight-forty-five.

MARQUEE, *547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)*—The current front-runner on the alternative-music scene. The **MEKONS,** who'll be here on Nov. 16, are longtime critical and cult favorites who haven't yet managed to reach a mass audience. This Leeds band presents itself as a cross between a revolutionary commune and a seminar on itself, all of which would be pretty awful if these survivors from the days of punk didn't play such marvellous, haunting music. The show starts at nine.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, a drum head, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. The beer of choice here is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study *for,* but many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. **MARSHALL CRENSHAW** will be here on Nov. 16, playing an acoustic set with Graham Maby (at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty). Also: Johnnie Johnson and the Blue Chieftains, on Nov. 15 (at nine); **DREAM WARRIORS** and Drop Acid on Nov. 17 (at nine).

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. The dark, sombre bar (carved-wood lions, iron grillwork) looks like a place you'd find in London's financial district; the dining room—putting-green carpet, lime-green leather banquettes—has more of a country-club feel. The **ROY GERSON SWINGTET** is currently in residence, offering a program devoted to the music of Louis Jordan. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Closed Sundays.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Not to be confused with its richer cousin, the Rainbow Room, which is just down the hall. There, you'll find expansive Art Deco glitter; here, intimate nineties glitter. The performers, with their backs to the window, compete with a view of the Hudson, the George Washington Bridge, and beyond. Just now, the club is home to “The Rodgers and Hart Revue,” which features some very worthy talent, including **MARGARET WHITING** and **ELAINE STRITCH.** Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This decaying theatre was once the famous Studio 54, where the late Steve Rubell's henchmen helped popularize the policy of turning away the unbeautiful. Now it's the home of one of the city's biggest, oldest, and loudest rock clubs, which was formerly housed in a decaying ballroom in the East Village. The club features a broad stage, mobile-home-size speakers, plenty of room to shimmy, and, for the sedentary, a giant Big Brother video screen. **SQUEEZE,** who have been playing impeccable, beautifully constructed pop tunes for years, show up for a rare club performance on Nov. 13. Their new album, “Play,” is one of their best, and their shows are loose, expressive affairs, filled with sinister mid-tempo songs that rank right up there with Costello's. **BILLY BRAGG,** with a full band, performs on Nov. 16. The bill also includes, among others, the **CRASH TEST DUMMIES,** a promising Canadian pop-folk group who recently put out their first album. Shows begin at nine Sundays through Thursdays, and at eleven Fridays and Saturdays.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Known for, among countless other things, a scene in “Manhattan” in which Woody Allen tries to teach his young son how to score. Last fall, after a long slumber, the Tea Room's small, red-gold-and-green cabaret reopened with a series of performances. **DAVID STALLER,** a young Illinois-born actor and singer who divides his time between Broadway, Off Broadway, television, and cabaret, will perform on Nov. 17. Shows Sundays at eight and, upon demand, ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut decorated with a fruit-and-bamboo motif and dedicated to such things as calypso, reggae, and bossa nova. S.O.B.'s dance floor is always jumping with Rastas and N.Y.U. students, and there's usually someone onstage shouting “Put your hands in the air!” The schedule, in part: **DREAM WARRIORS** on Nov. 12, with Pops Cool Love opening; and the great seventies funk band the **OHIO PLAYERS** on Nov. 19. Closed Sundays. Dining.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—If you arrive late for a show at this shrine of jazz, you run the risk of being seated in the glass-enclosed terrace, which means you'll need a periscope to see the show and a parka to live through it. Otherwise, Sweet Basil is just the right environment for patrons—chiefly because it has a silence-or-else policy during shows. Flugelhornist **ART FARMER'S** quintet is in evidence Nov. 12-17; the **TOMMY FLANAGAN** trio kicks off on Nov. 19. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Located on a Chelsea block that's like an urban Disneyland (Chelsea Billiards, an indoor miniature-golf course, a trendy all-night diner, Limelight around the corner), this roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is a lot bigger and a lot slicker than the old Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. **JEAN-PAUL BOURELLY** and **GARY LUCAS** will be here on Nov. 14. Music from eight on weeknights and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of “poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers.” **SUN RA AND THE ALL-STAR INVENTIONS,** featuring **JOHN GILMORE,** are in attendance Nov. 12-17. **KENNY BARRON'S** quartet takes charge the week beginning Nov. 19. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—This groovy, right-minded, poly-correct night club and community-service center will host part two of this year's benefit for Planned Parenthood, on Nov. 13. **MARSHALL CRENSHAW, SYD STRAW, DAVID MUNYON,** and **BETTY** are among the performers. Last year's Planned Parenthood benefit was a hoot. Apart from the brimming bowls of condoms that were passed around, the evening seemed intended to entertain the troops rather than to preach to the converted. Music at eight.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. ***MIKE LE DONNE, DENNIS IRWIN,*** and **KENNY WASHINGTON** work out together Nov. 11-16; ***KIRK LIGHTSEY*** and ***SANTI DEBRIANO*** get under way on Nov. 18. Music from eight.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

THE ready-to-boo-at-the-drop-of-a-half-note audience that hangs off the balcony at the Apollo at its weekly Amateur Night is merely Loni Anderson-tough next to the coterie of fierceness that showed up there for a Night of Fabulous Fakes. Onstage, only half of the evening's appelation usually worked at a time—either the voguers were fabulous or the drag acts were fakes; the two descriptions rarely worked in tandem, possibly because, as one of the evening's hostesses admitted, there was more than adequate refreshment backstage between numbers. Consequently, what started out as refreshingly cheeky monologues by two aging divas degenerated into jowly slurs by an interminable Act II. The only performer to deliver what was promised was a young man who vogued the old-fashioned way. No executive or banji-girl realness for him. Looking uncannily like Naomi Campbell had she been around to model Claire McCardell, he threw shoulders back and pelvis out, and posed very precisely.

Offstage, however, the several contingents adhering to the spirit of the evening obviously feared nothing—not the surgeon's knife, not portable stepladders masquerading as stiletto heels. “You can tell the real women because they're wearing flats,” said one observer at intermission watching the serious drags watching some straights frugging to a passerby's boom box. “Is there anything scarier than a white boy dancing?” asked a shawled beauty working a clutch bag more determinedly than a novitiate with a rosary. “Yeah. A white girl dancing,” laughed her buddette. The glamorous, plaid-clad young voguer walked by. “Show them how, girlfriend,” one of the pair called to him. It took just one twirl. “She's truly fabulous,” the stilettoed agreed. Suddenly, “fakes” seemed such a relative term.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL—Nov. 14 at 7 and Nov. 15-16 at 8: Choreographer Wim Vandekeybus and his company, Ultima Vez, in “Always the Same Lies.” (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. The festival continues through Dec. 7.)

BIG APPLE CIRCUS—Performances under the little big top run through Jan. 5, in Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. For ticket and schedule information, call 874-8990.

"THE CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR"—Radio City Music Hall's annual Yuletide dancearama—with the Rockettes, of course—opens Nov. 15 and runs though Jan. 7. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20			

For information about show times and tickets, call 247-4777.)

Moscow Circus–Cirk Valentin—The well-known troupe in a new edition of its show. Bobby Previte composed the score. (Gershwin Theatre, 51st St. west of Broadway. For information about show times and tickets, call 586-6510. Through Jan. 5.)

Walt Disney's World on Ice—With Mickey, Minnie, and many others. (Nassau Coliseum. Nov. 19-24. For information about show times and tickets, call 1-516 794-9300.)

"Sally's Rape: The Whole Story"—A performance piece by Robbie McCauley, performed by Ms. McCauley and Jeannie Hutchins. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 13-16 at 8:30.)

Blue Man Group—Presenting “Tubes.” (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, Saturdays at 7 and 10, and Sundays at 3 and 7.)

"Perfect Courage"—A new work by Rhodessa and Bill T. Jones and Idris Ackamoor. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7100. Nov. 15-16 at 8 and Nov. 17 at 2.)

"Tell Tale Signs"—A new work by Ann Carlson and Otrabanda Company. Also on the bill is “The Magnificent Zandoo,” with Paul Zimet and Roger Babb. (Downtown Art Co., 64 E. 4th St. Nov. 14-16 at 8 and Nov. 17 at 5. Through Nov. 24. For information about tickets, call 979-7362.)

Frank Maya—Presenting a work in progress. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, between Houston and Prince Sts. 219-3088. Nov. 15 at 10:30.)

P. S. 122—Nov. 14-17 at 8: Judith Ren-Lay in a dance-performance. . . . ¶ Nov. 14-17 at 9: Sekou Sundiata & Dadahdoodahda in “Rhythm & News.” (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

ART

GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION is the focus of Lucas Samaras's current show, a retrospective ranging from drawings made in 1952, when the artist was in high school, to his 1991 “mosaic paintings,” a series of combustively inventive formal variations on what seems to be an apartment floor plan—the artist's own? The inspired solipsism of Samaras's catalogue self-interview certainly suggests cabin fever. The very title Samaras gave this exhibition, “Slices of Abstraction, Slivers of Passion, and/or Mere Décor” (Pace, 32 East 57th Street; through November 30), tells you quite a bit about this artist and his œuvre: there's that contentious humor, that cutting edge. Samaras, in fact, likes to fondle an old grudge. The word “décor,” for instance, invoked here with such proud defiance, long ago lost its disparaging charge. Decorative though his work may be, in that it is often bright and patterned and suitable for the home, it is much too manically intense to ever have been “mere” anything.

The work on view suggests a remarkably steady eye, hand, and mind. Samaras is evidently one of those people who were hatched fully formed. While he has certainly made different kinds of things over the years—from fetish boxes to photographs to crazy quilts to paintings—a sense of step-by-step development has never been an element of his work. Those high-school drawings—part latter-day Vorticist, part M. C. Escher, and tethered in place by architectonic grids and webs—seem no younger at heart than his most recent efforts, or indeed than anything that came between, whether his 1969 “Seven Cut Prints,” a wonderful trousseau of artful doilies, or his forays into optical abstraction, alternately folkloric and science fictional in tone. Samaras, eccentric though he is, is as securely hooked to the past as to the present. If Surrealism is the common ancestor of his witchy objects and pornographic Polaroids, those works are themselves the parents of Aimee Morgana's Black Magic installations and Arch Connelly's homoerotic photocollages. If the Delaunays and Alfred Jensen seem distant progenitors of Samaras, a young artist like Peter Schuyff takes after him.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—“Seurat.” A crisply efficient and compartmentalized exhibition of paintings by the short-lived Neo-Impressionist, on the centenary of his death. We belong to a minority, perhaps, in feeling that the Met's installation style has become relentlessly didactic, formulaic, inert. It's as if there were a curatorial conspiracy against visual surprise, as if viewers couldn't be trusted to discover anything at all about art or artists on their own. It's as if works of art were hung so as to make Acoustiguide scriptwriting an easier task. We far preferred the blowsier, Grand Palais edition of this show. Still, whatever its shortcomings, it shouldn't be missed. Seurat's drawings are among the most sublimely painstaking works on paper ever made. A few conjure Filippo Lippi and Dan Flavin in a single breath. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ “Neo-Impressionism: The Friends and Followers of Georges Seurat,” best taken as a kind of appetizer before the main course, consists of eighty-eight paintings, drawings, and watercolors by Paul Signac, Camille Pissarro, Henri Matisse, and many others. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ A selection of a hundred and fifty American watercolors from the museum's collection. Through Dec. 10. . . . ¶ Sixteenth-century Italy has taken up permanent residence in a new installation of sculptures, furniture, tapestries, and much more that reveals the influence of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. . . . ¶ “Resplendence of the Spanish Monarchy.” This breathtaking exhibition of sixteenth-century works centers on eleven very large tapestries of beautifully intricate detail, made by the most respected Flemish craftsmen, and on some of the finest armor ever forged, from Augsburg, in present-day Germany. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ “Alphabets.” If you find yourself somewhere between the Old Master and the nineteenth-century galleries, this small display of prints of the alphabet is an appealing diversion. Included are an inventive Italian “R” constructed from a pack of playing cards, and Jan Theodor De Bry's highly stylized late-sixteenth-century letters, including an “N” adorned with fish and gourds and having a portrait of Noah at its center. Through Dec. 1. . . . ¶ A small show of twenty-nine nineteenth-century European photographs, by such artists as Le Gray, Baldus, and Nadar. Through Dec. 1. . . . ¶ “The Lotus Transcendent,” a display of about two hundred small sculptures from Thailand, Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

William Copley

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—“*Dislocations*” is an exhibition of seven commissioned installations, by Louise Bourgeois, Chris Burden, Sophie Calle, David Hammons, Ilya Kabakov, Bruce Nauman, and Adrian Piper. The show is ambitious, confrontational, bracing, and histrionic throughout; the works form a sort of choral *j'accuse*—a collective reproof of racial, sexual, and class stereotypes, as well as of nationalism, governments, bureaucracies, and war. Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ “Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort” explores the contemporary photographer's supposed preoccupation with the life of the home in more than a hundred and fifty works by Nan Goldin, William Eggleston, Cindy Sherman, Tina Barney, and others. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ A compact, quite brilliant installation of masks and helmets—all twentieth-century, most Western—used for sports, medicine, and the exploration of the sea and outer space. Through Nov. 19. . . . ¶ An exhibition of drawings, photographs, scale models, and a video related to projects by Tadao Ando, one of Japan's leading architects, who designed this show himself. It's a beautiful but rather chilly mix of two well-known modern Japanese specialties: high-tech corporate production values and exquisitely rendered, dauntingly pristine structures for life, work, and the spirit—all somehow seen in the abstract. Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ The annual “New Photography” series presents recent work by Eberhard Grames, Sheron Rupp, and Stephen A. Scheer. Through Jan. 7. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until May, 1992.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Unlike most other artists who have died of AIDS, Scott Burton (1939-89), it seems, had enough time to make mature work. This show of the last works he designed, which were fabricated after his death, indicates that this master of functional sculpture was headed in an unanticipated direction. In the post-minimal seventies, Burton cleverly implied a human presence in his exquisite, modernistic sculptures in the form of chairs and tables. These last furniture sculptures are straightforwardly figurative: a pair of cherry “Guardian Cabinets” with mirrorlike bronze heads, a Chac-Moolesque granite “Bench Goddess,” and a stainless-steel “Slave Table” in the form of a crawling man. The sphinxian arrangement of the sculptures here recalls the artist's performance works, and is rich with both childlike fantasy and sadistic suggestion. Through Dec. 8. . . . ¶ Fifty mobiles, stabiles, works on paper, tapestries, and other objects by Alexander Calder (1898-1976). Starts Nov. 14. . . . ¶ “American Life in American Art.” Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—“Sigmar Polke.” Despite some big problems—the absence of films, for one—this mid-career retrospective comes as a pleasant surprise. It begins in the mid-sixties, with essentially good-natured parodies of minimal and Conceptual art, which are nevertheless underscored by a certain resignation to their hegemony. There is a bewildering and unexplained ten-year gap, right in the middle of the artist's career (essentially spanning the seventies)—no small hole in a show that covers less than three decades. When the exhibition resumes, with early-eighties work, the trickster in Polke returns with a vengeance, teasing with one hand while stroking with the other. From this period come the finest paintings of Polke's career, including the symphonic "Paganini" and the haunting "The Camp." Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ "Objects of Myth and Memory." A fascinating exhibition of two hundred and fifty of the nine thousand Native American objects that the museum owns; nothing from the collection has been on view since the thirties. Some of them are exquisite: a group of extraordinary Mimbres stone figures, a charming Zuni fetish in the form of a bear, a number of haunting kachina dolls. The most engaging items are not the treasures, of which there are a number, but the objects of daily life: games, clothes, pots, baskets, belt buckles, rattles, and hats. Through Dec. 29. . . . ¶ A companion show of contemporary Native American works, including ceramics, elkhorn carvings, and Pomo baskets. Through Jan. 27. . . . ¶ A thirty-foot-long platform of forged-iron sculptures is the fifteenth installment in Alain Kirili's "Commandment" series. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch" presents elaborately decorated plates and bowls, masks, and other objects used in the British Columbian tribe's lavish rituals of hospitality and wealth. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

AMERICAN ACADEMY AND INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS, Broadway at 155th St.—The forty-third annual purchase exhibition. Fifty-eight contemporary artists are represented this year, among them Jane Hammond, Sean Scully, Ida Applebroog, and Nicholas Africano. About one-third of the works on view will be bought by the Academy and donated to museums around the country. Through Dec. 8. (Open daily, except Mondays, 1 to 4.)

AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Frank Lloyd Wright: Preserving an Architectural Heritage" is a show of more than seventy pieces of furniture, art-glass windows, lights, and other decorative objects spanning sixty years of the architect's career. Through Jan. 19. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Undercurrents in the Floating World: Censorship and Japanese Prints." Although the pretty, often erotic ukiyo-e prints of the Tokugawa period (1615-1868) are perhaps the most popular of all Japanese art, they are rarely understood in their historical context, which has little to do with the picturesqueness that influenced Monet, Whistler, and others. Produced during an artistically repressive time, they were subject to the scrutiny of censors. What's more, artists were forced to conform to rigid rules, many of which might sound silly today, even though, curiously, explicit sexual imagery was often deemed acceptable. By means of informative wall labels, this exhibition articulately decodes works in several categories: "dangerous pictures," "heroes in disguise," "secret messages," and "forbidden news." The show is an intelligent and impassioned response to recent attempts to legislate "appropriate" subject matter for art. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ "Motifs and Meanings in Asian Art," a selection of sixty Korean, Chinese, and Japanese works from the Rockefeller collection. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"The Sigmund Freud Antiquities: Fragments from a Buried Past" is a show of eighty-six objects from the psychoanalyst's personal collection, including Egyptian, Greek, Near Eastern, and Asian works. Another twenty works from London's Freud Museum and the Library of Congress supplement the exhibition, which was inspired by Edmund Engelman's 1938 photographs of Freud's Vienna study. Eight of those works are also on view. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, 11 to 3.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St.—The library now possesses greatly improved interior spaces. The Morgan House (at 37th and Madison) has been purchased, and a glass-enclosed garden court has been constructed to connect the two buildings. The permanent collection is now given three new gallery spaces and is shown off in "Masterpieces of the Morgan Library." Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Hallowed Haunts," a show of seventy-three drawings and watercolors by Charles Addams (1912-88), most of which first appeared in these pages. Through Jan. 12. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Imagining the New World" is a shipload of paintings, drawings, maps, astrolabes, and other Columbian iconography drawn from museums and libraries in Italy, France, and Germany. Starts Nov. 13. . . . ¶ "While They Fought: The Homefront in New York City" includes many posters, photographs (one shows Kate Smith surrounded by sailors), and artifacts from the Second World War. . . . ¶ Forty watercolors of New York and New Jersey landscapes by William Rickarby Miller (1818-93). Through Nov. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Merlin, Mordred, Gawain, and Galahad leap off the pages and prints of "King Arthur: Looking at the Legend." Through Feb. 22. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ A hundred and fifty German Expressionist prints and books—mostly from the period 1910-30—by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Käthe Kollwitz, Wassily Kandinsky, George Grosz, and others. Through Jan. 4. (Third Floor Gallery. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART, Flushing Meadow Park—"Closet No. 9," by Kenny Scharf, is one of the artist's surreal Day-Glo environments, incorporating paintings, customized appliances, and industrial materials. Through Dec. 20. . . . ¶ Seventeen drawings and sculptures by Mel Chin. Starts Nov. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

RACKSTRAW DOWNES—Recent landscape paintings of midtown and downtown Manhattan, Texas, and Maine. John Ruskin would probably have approved of this artist more than of any other working today. He is an extraordinarily meticulous realist who also evokes a sense of philosophical breadth. While subdued, his work never seems cold, and though technically disciplined, to say the least, it is always painterly as well. In two panoramic views, for instance, of an industrialized stretch of countryside near Rockland, Maine, he not only keeps us visually interested in several broad patches of brown mud but also makes us feel the subtle psychological difference between late-February mud and the same mud about six weeks later. Through Nov. 16. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Open Mondays.)

SHORT LIST—JOELLYN DUESBERRY, Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through Dec. 14); **JÖRG IMMENDORFF,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. (through Dec. 21); **MARINO MARINI,** Kent, 47 E. 63rd St. (open Mondays, closed Saturdays, through Dec. 20); **BOB THOMPSON,** Vanderwoude Tananbaum, 24 E. 81st St. (through Dec. 14).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

ANTHONY CARO / HANS HOFMANN (1880-1966)—A new group of sculptures titled "The Cascades." These works come with prominent pedestals, the very elements Caro so brilliantly abjured thirty years ago. This reassessment is, in its mellower way, impressive as well. Highly intricate, aggregate forms of painted or waxed steel—some at the very threshold of representation—seem variously

THE BOFFINS BAFFLED

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CULTIVATED

Last summer, you may recall, fifteen standard minutes of fame went to a fellow who was raising corn on a median strip on upper Broadway. But that's small potatoes (sorry) compared to another crop, in Kew Gardens, which is just now ready to be harvested. Someone there has staked out a thriving vegetable patch, on an embankment of the Long Island Rail Road, just inside a chain-link fence. To really appreciate the audacity of the enterprise, try looking at it from the commuter's point of view: You've pulled out of Jamaica, your bleary eyes taking in an indifferent vista of overpasses and back sides of buildings. You're just about to turn back to the sports section when—whammo!—down below you stretch rows of carefully tended, neatly aligned produce, defiantly green in a no man's land of tracks and gravel.

Whoever is in charge here means business: Adjoining the plantation is an asphalt-shingle shed, ivy-entwined trellises made out of pipe, and a compost heap topped off with a few gourds. The thundering rumble of the trains so close to the vegetables does not appear to have unduly stunted their growth; in any event, they constitute a fairly diverse salad: broccoli, eggplant, cauliflower, peppers, and onions are all present, though the hundred-plus tomato plants win the award for sheer abundance. While the relationship between the garden and its environs is hardly symbiotic, railroad ties do serve to delineate a couple of the vegetable beds, and hanging from the fence are scraps of scraggly brown dross that were once beans. A four-foot Teddy bear hangs upside down in one of several fig trees that stand guard over the smaller plants. Having succeeded in getting a hundred vegetables to blossom in the grim shadow of mass transit, could it be that the unknown farmer has also found a superior scarecrow?

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to grip, to spill upon, to be splayed over, and to be collapsed onto their blocky supports. Caro's roughly sensuous surfaces are incomparable. In "Mouchoir"—the effete one in this crowd—steel imitates leather and felt. This artist constantly changes horses and never fails to amaze. / A group of gouache-and-collage studies, from the fifties, titled "Projects for Mosaic Walls." Through Nov. 16. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Tony Cragg—Eight new works. This brilliant sculptor, a former junk-yard dog and orchestrator of detritus, is making rather grand and enduring pieces these days, and is sounding a number of thematic gongs. His partly deconstructed black marble Walkman, with its fast-forward and rewind arrows and rather funereal body, might be an epitaph for contemporary sculpture: two parts minimalism to one part Pop. "Trees," which consists of three beech trunks into which oversized wood rubber-stamp handles have been driven, suggests the romantic naturalism of Arte Povera and an artist like Giuseppe Penone. "The Crossing," however, a roiling roller-coaster construction of miniature freeways complete with little cars, is most Craggish of all—the strangest, toughest thing in this very strong show. Through Nov. 30. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Rebecca Purdum / Fielding Dawson—Recent abstractions, in this painter's characteristically blurry style. Purdum's lovely bog-mist effects, however, now seem to be a breeding ground for more distinct illusions. Nocturnal cityscapes, for instance, seem to be gathering form in a couple of these fogs. It's as if she took Monet's "Water Lilies" as her point of departure and is now slowly moving backward—toward "The Terrace at Sainte-Adresse"? / Rambunctious satirical drawings by this chronicler of life in the good old days at Black Mountain College. The subjects of Dawson's caricatures include famous cartoon characters, a number of the usual political suspects, and one Mr. Probst, a faculty meanie from the artist's high-school days. Through Nov. 16. (Tilton, 24 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**ALEXANDER ARCHIPENKO,** Adler, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 2); **DONALD BAECHLER,** Baron-Boisanté, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 21); **VANESSA BELL** and **DUNCAN GRANT,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. (through Nov. 16); **FREDERICK BROSEN,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through Nov. 23); **ENZO CUCCHI,** Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 30); **NICOLA DE MARIA,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 30); **RAINER GROSS,** Ruth Siegel, 24 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 30); **ROBERT KUSHNER,** Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 7); **SEYMOUR LIPTON,** Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Dec. 22); **RICHARD POUSETTE-DART,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 7); **HARVEY QUAYTMAN,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 20); **ANNE RYAN** and **STUART DAVIS,** Washburn, 41 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 30); **ANTONIO SAURA,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through Dec. 14); **ABBY SHAHN,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 30); **HOUGHTON CRANFORD SMITH** and **MAX BECKMANN,** Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Nov. 27); **LINDA SOKOLOWSKI,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Dec. 7); **DANIEL SPOERRI,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (open Mondays, through Dec. 31); **PAVEL TCHELITCHEW,** Rosenfeld, 50 W. 57th St. (through Dec. 14); **JAMES VALERIO** (through Nov. 20) and **LUIS CRUZ AZACETA** (through Dec. 31), Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.; **JANE WILSON,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. (through Nov. 30).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Ida Applebroog—A series of nearly thirty new paintings—some multi-panelled, some fragmented and freestanding—all of which are colored by a sense of withdrawal and isolation. Applebroog takes on issues of sexual harassment, aging, health care, and nature, and her works are pervaded by an unshakable feeling of injury. Through Dec. 14. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

Robbie Conal—Paintings with text, including a pair of portraits of Tammy Faye and Jim Bakker, captioned "False Profit," and a troika of Reagan, Poindexter, and North, respectively labelled "Hear," "See," and "Speak." This astute political commentator's captions are sharp, but his painting technique is mediocre. Through Nov. 16. (Baum, 588 Broadway.)

David Diao—A very funny, if lightweight, show of recent paintings that address issues of success. One work consists of red dots of varying sizes, corresponding to the number of paintings the artist sold in different years. They divulge the sort of information every artist and dealer fiercely protects, but the piece is much less revealing than it pretends to be. Through Nov. 16. (Postmasters, 80 Greene St.)

Cary S. Leibowitz—An exhibition titled "The Candyass Carnival." It is probably impossible not to give in to this dreadful jamboree. It's stupid, puerile, at once shamelessly mercantile (mugs and other bric-a-brac are sold) and unabashedly loser-friendly. Leibowitz' familiar motifs—the little painted valentines to scores of other, better-known artists; the obnoxiously fratlike pro-"homo" slogans; the pimply, high-school-reject things—are all in attendance here. There are also many new street-fair-style attractions, and a few friendly drag queens, to make you feel right at home. Through Nov. 16. (Stux, 155 Spring St.)

Alfred Leslie—Five grisaille paintings from the sixties. These are realist behemoths and include portraits of the artist and his third

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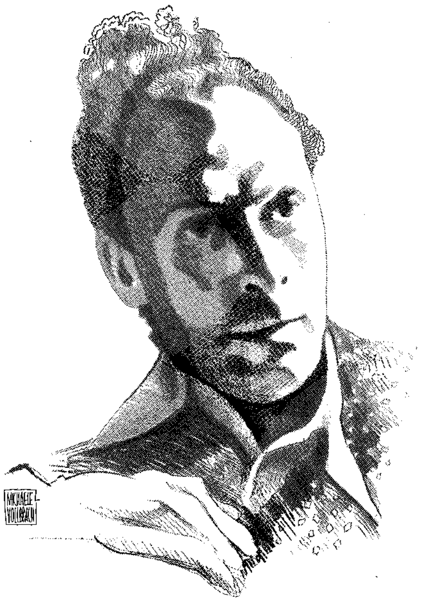


Pavel Tchelitchew

wife—clothed, as if they were an Adam and Eve already fallen—along with several female nudes lit so glaringly and powerfully that their anatomical details could compete with the target shapes and triangles of color-field abstraction. Through Dec. 21. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.)

Richard Long—The central work in this show is an exquisite *allée* forty-eight feet long made of broken slabs of reddish-green slate propped against one another; it suggests a formation caused by millions of years of natural activity. Also included, on a nearby wall, is one of the artist's energetically executed large mud circles; it is supple and seems to have been precipitated into existence in a moment. Through Nov. 16. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St.)

Ed Moses—A beautiful show of new paintings by one of the elder statesmen of California abstraction. The artist strikes a subtle balance between forceful form and delicate technique with his layered transparent globule shapes. Through Nov. 23. (Louver, 130 Prince St.)

Han Schuil—Geometric abstractions, in oil on aluminum, by a clever young Dutch artist. These mostly big, bold works evoke the designs of De Stijl; they also suggest international highway symbols. They're handsome and stylish, though maybe a bit pat. Through Nov. 16. (Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway.)

Haim Steinbach—In recent years this artist has seemed to be somewhat stalled, caught between producing repetitive variations on a theme and attempting, often inarticulately, to give form to grander ambitions. The desire to expand the scope of his consumerist work has now brought Steinbach to a more secure place, particularly with an installation work consisting of a barn-type wall, painted milky white, whose two doors the viewer may open. Beyond one door is a surprise that's at once ordinary and metaphorically rich, and beyond the other is a separate work. The pieces here that conform to the artist's familiar shelf-with-objects format may appeal more to the collector than to the mere passerby. Through Nov. 16. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Short List—**ELISE ASHER,** Kelly, 591 Broadway *(through Dec. 3)*; **FORD BECKMAN,** *Shafrazi,* 130 Prince St. (through Nov. 30); **JOHN BEERMAN,** Lorence-Monk, 578 Broadway (through Dec. 21); **CHUCK CLOSE,** Pace, 142 Greene St. (through Dec. 7); **PAT COLVILLE,** Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St. (through Nov. 23); **WILLIAM COPLEY,** Nolan, 560 Broadway, (starts Nov. 16); **GÜNTER FÖRG,** Lorence-Monk, 568 Broadway (through Nov. 30); **ROBERT JESSUP,** Gimpel-Weitzenhoffer, 415 West Broadway (through Dec. 7); **MAGDALENA JETELOVÁ,** Weber, 142 Greene St. (through Nov. 23); **LOIS LANE,** Toll, 146 Greene St. (through Nov. 30); **SOL LEWITT,** Pretto, 103 Sullivan St. (through Nov. 30); **MICHAEL LOEW,** Pearl, 420 West Broadway (through Nov. 16); **PAUL MARCUS,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (through Nov. 23); **SUSAN NORRIE,** Hoffman, 429 West Broadway (through Dec. 11); **TONY OURSLER,** Brown, 23 Watts St. (through Nov. 30); **GIULIO PAOLINI,** SteinGladstone, 99 Wooster St. (through Dec. 21); **BARBARA ROSSI,** Kind, 136 Greene St. (through Nov. 16); **CHÉRI SAMBA,** Nosei, 100 Prince St. (through Dec. 7); **ITALO SCANGA,** Helander, 415 West Broadway (through Dec. 4); **RICHARD SERRA,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. (through Jan. 11); **EDVINS STRAUTMANIS,** Rosenberg, 115 Wooster St. (*through* Nov. *23*); **PAUL WALDMAN,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Nov. 16); **WILLIAM WEGMAN,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. (through Jan. 4).

PHOTOGRAPHY

WHAT paparazzi do is usually seen more as throwaway photography than something to be critically respected. Yet some of our most socially perceptive photographers have loosely fit the category of paparazzo. For instance, it's hard to beat Weegee for a nitty-gritty or even a tender portrait of city life. And for some time now it has been Bill Cunningham's on-the-street photographs that have given us revelations about the fashion world, and in fact have shown the fashion world the fantastic looks of people who aren't "fashion victims." Unfortunately, this more casual form of photography isn't given much serious attention, so it's with particular pleasure that we note the show of Jean Pigozzi's work (Gagosian, 980 Madison Avenue, at 76th Street; through November 15), as well as the publication of his book "A Short Visit to Planet Earth," which has an introduction by the highly original Italian designer Ettore Sottsass.

From this book and show it would appear that Pigozzi knows many of the world's celebrities (we happen to know that the fellow is well-connected), but that hasn't lost him the irony that often characterizes the best work in his field. Pigozzi's photographs of the famous, of the rich, and of himself have humor, warmth, and even a kind of satirical wisdom about sycophancy and narcissism. In the book, for instance, there's his photograph, from 1989, of his silhouette against the window of an airplane, titled "My Nose, Returning from Tokyo."

Nick Waplington—All the photographs here are of two families in Nottingham, England, plus their friends and people from their neighborhoods. Waplington's color images are lively and believable, because in making them he became part of these surroundings, seizing the chaos, the fun, the bad times, the movement. There's nothing picturesque about his perspective. Through Nov. 27. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St.)

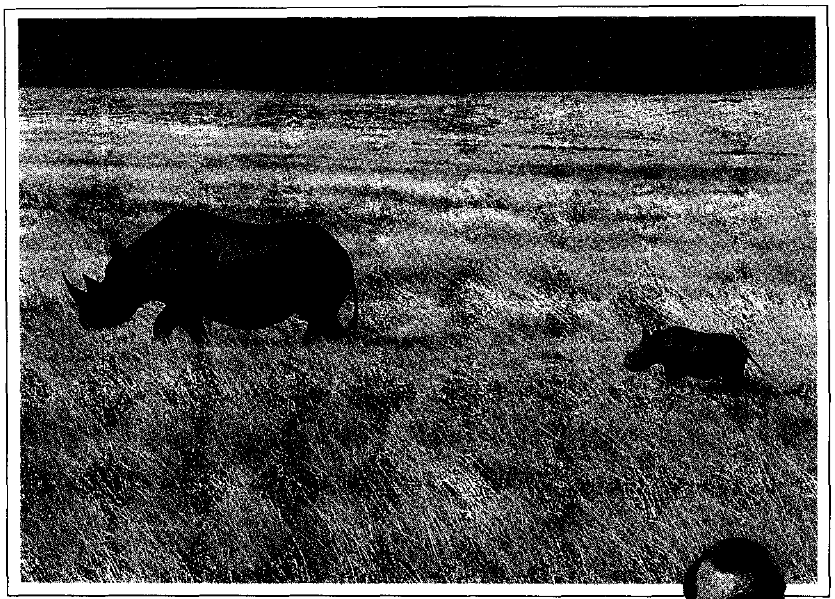
Short List—**TINA BARNEY,** Borden, 560 Broadway (through Nov. 27); **WILLIAM CLAXTON,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through Nov. 30); **FRANTIŠEK DRTIKOL,** Greenberg, *120* Wooster St. (through Dec. 7); **LEE FRIEDLANDER,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Nov. 23); **ANNIE LEIBOVITZ,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through Dec. 1); **JOEL MEYEROWITZ,** Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through Nov. 23); **IRVING PENN,** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Nov. 30); **RICHARD RABBERS,** 4th Street Photo, 67 E. 4th St. (open Tusedays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 2 to 8; Fridays and Saturdays, 3 to 10; through Nov. *30*); **MATTHEW ROLSTON,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through Nov. 30); **LAURIE SIMMONS,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through Nov. 16).

MUSIC

THE most exciting sounds we've heard in the Mozart celebrations so far weren't by Mozart—indeed, some of them weren't even musical sounds at all. They happened near the end of the first movement of the F-Major Concerto (K. 459), performed during the Mostly Mozart season last summer. On that occasion, Robert Levin was playing the piano and Christopher Hogwood was leading the orchestra.

Mr. Levin has a specialty act. Besides being a soloist and teacher well established in Europe, he is also a noted musicologist and a longtime professor of music theory. His specialty, which draws on all of these branches of activity, is improvising cadenzas in Classical concertos. There is something commanding about the ability to improvise under pressure in public. We remember once seeing Marvin Hamlisch at Carnegie Hall making up pop songs—words and music—on the spot in one try, based on titles or first lines suggested by the audience. Whatever place we may think Mr. Hamlisch holds in the history of musical creativity, we credit him with an expertise, assurance, and fecundity that are genuinely inspiring. Mr. Levin plies his trade on more elevated material, but he does not shun (any more than Mozart did) the circus element of the art. At Mostly Mozart, he let the audience submit themes (on music paper distributed at intermission), drew his selections out of a box onstage, and improvised a Mozartean fantasia on them.

But the moment we remember best came earlier, in the cadenza to the concerto. Mr. Levin had given the audience a bit of an idea of what was involved, in a lively, informal way. "Near the end of the movement," he said—or words to this effect—"you'll hear the orchestra pause on a big chord. A lot of people will be wondering what the hell is going to happen next, and one of those people will be me." But when the moment came his comment didn't seem flip. The pianist set the movement's themes talking to one another, travelling to new harmonic regions, and made his way back—as we knew he must but didn't know how or when he would—to the six-four chord the orchestra had left him with. When he got there, he announced it with a grand sweep to the top of the keyboard, making a sound that resonated in a way we don't expect from a Classical-period piano. Then came the trill, then the congratulatory reëntry of the orchestra. And then applause burst out—not at the end of the music but during the noisy tutti. A spontaneous audience reaction at Avery Fisher Hall! Like the clapping after a solo in a jazz concert, it went on just long enough to make its point vividly without drowning out anything that needed to be heard. What an exhilarating moment! We will be there when Mr. Levin and Mr. Hogwood play again, on November 17.



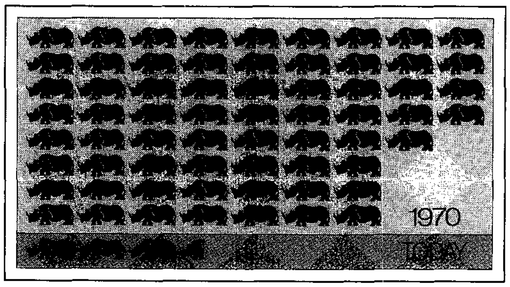
"Saving our wildlife is not only an environmental necessity, it's a cultural one as well."

Dr. Richard Leakey

Kenya. Vast herds of animals converge on a hot, dusty African plain. A bright orange sun hangs low on the horizon. Zebras, rhinos, giraffes, and elephants abound.

A pleasant dream, but the unfortunate reality is that due to poaching and human encroachment, the majestic herds are fast disappearing. It's Dr. Richard Leakey's job to see that they don't.

Leakey is Kenya's Director of Wildlife Conservation. "A somewhat curious position for a paleontologist," he admits, "but perhaps I understand better than most the patterns of evolution. What we do today will affect future generations."

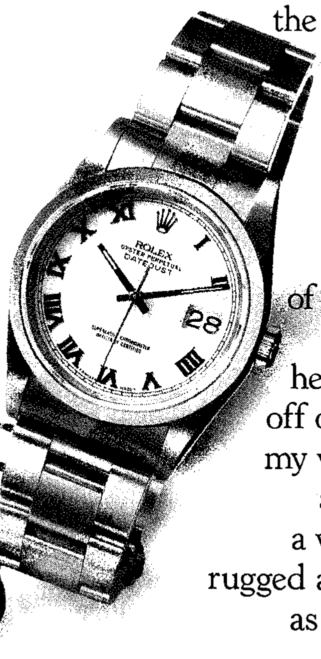


"Statistics indicate that our conservation efforts have reversed this decline of Kenya's black rhino population." Dr. Leakey

Beyond being a scientist, Richard Leakey is first and foremost an African, born and raised on the plains of East Africa. It is his love for this continent, and the rare and beautiful species in it, that has led him to this job.

"In 1970, there were over sixty thousand black rhinos in Africa," Leakey notes. "Today, there are about three and one-half thousand. Through our efforts we've managed to reverse this headlong avalanche toward extinction. It's important because the natural beauty of our wildlife is an intrinsic part of Kenya. To lose it would be to lose a major portion of our soul."

More than most, Richard Leakey is keenly aware of the imperatives of time. "My agenda takes me to all four corners of the globe," he says, "and whether I'm flying off on a lecture tour, or threading my way through the bush, I can't afford to be bogged down by a watch that's not as rugged and dependable as my Rolex."



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MUSIC—Cont'd

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—COSÌ FAN TUTTE, with Carol Vaness, Delores Ziegler, Dawn Upshaw, Frank Lopardo, Lucio Gallo, and Renato Capecchi; conducted by Leopold Hager. (Nov. 11 and Nov. 15 at 8.)... AIDA, with Aprile Millo, Dolora Zajick, Lando Bartolini, and Timothy Noble; Rico Saccani. (Nov. 12, Nov. 16, and Nov. 20, all at 8.)... L'ELISIR D'AMORE, in a new production, with Kathleen Battle, Luciano Pavarotti, Juan Pons, and Enzo Dara; Marcello Panni. (Nov. 13 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 1:30.)... With Kathleen Battle, Alfredo Kraus, Mark Oswald, and Enzo Dara; Marcello Panni. (Nov. 19 at 8.)... LA TRAVIATA, with Marilyn Mims, Franco Farina, and Juan Pons; John Fiore. (Nov. 14 at 8.)... With Cheryl Studer, Franco Farina, and Juan Pons; John *Fiore. (Nov. 18 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera* House.)

New York City Opera—Final performances of the season. BRIGADOON, with Elizabeth Walsh, Louisa Flaningam, George Dvorsky, Tony Roberts, and Robert Tate; Paul Gemignani. (Nov. 12 and Nov. 14 at 8, and Nov. 16-17 at 2.)... With Michele McBride, Joyce Castle, John Leslie Wolfe, Tony Roberts, and David Eisler; Paul Gemignani. (Nov. 13 and Nov. 15-16 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Lee Hoiby Operas—See under "Bon Appétit!" in Theatre listings.

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

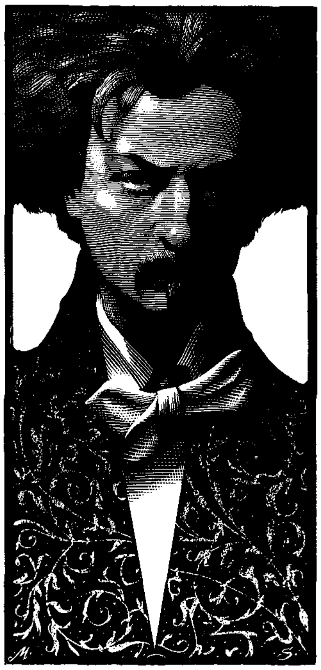
New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 12 at 7:30: Robert Shaw directs Barber's "Prayers of Kierkegaard" and Mozart's C-Minor Mass (K. 427), with soprano Sylvia McNair, mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, tenor Karl Dent, bass Roger Roloff, and the Westminster Symphonic Choir.... ¶ Nov. 14, Nov. 16, and Nov. 19, all at 8, and Nov. 15 at 2: Kurt Masur conducts four sets of variations: William Shuman's orchestral transcription of Ives' "Variations on 'America,'" Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," Reger's "Variations on a Theme of Mozart," and Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini" (with pianist Viktoria Postnikova).

Philadelphia Orchestra—Charles Dutoit conducts Rachmaninoff's "The Rock," Shostakovich's Symphony No. 15, and Brahms' Violin Concerto (featuring Pinchas Zukerman). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 12 at 8.)

Juilliard Orchestra—Richard Bradshaw conducts Elgar's First Symphony, Bloch's "Schelomo" (featuring cellist Eric Gaenslen), and Siegfried Matthus's "Night Scenes in the Park." (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

New York Choral Society—John Daly Goodwin directs the choir and orchestra in Dvořák's Stabat Mater, with Rachel Rosales (soprano), Phyllis Pancella (mezzo-soprano), Gregory Mercer (tenor), and David Evitts (baritone). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 16 at 8.)

Amor Artis—Johannes Somary directs a work of his own ("A Ballad of God and His People") in addition to Saint-Saëns' Requiem; with the orchestra augmented by the Fairfield County Chorale and the Horace Mann Glee Club. (St. Jean Baptiste Church, Lexington Ave. at 76th St. Nov. 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-4513.)



Ignacy Jan Paderewski

American Symphony Orchestra—Catherine Comet conducts works by Bernstein and Stravinsky, and violinist Kyoko Takezawa is the soloist in Chausson's "Poème" and Ravel's "Tzigane." (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 17 at 3.)

Academy of Ancient Music—Christopher Hogwood conducts Haydn's Symphony No. 101 (the "Clock"), as well as works by Mozart: his Symphony in D (K. 141a); his C-Major Piano Concerto (K. 503), with Robert Levin as soloist; and six orchestral minuets (K. 599). (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 17 at 3.)

Riverside Choir—John Walker and Arlan Sunnarborg variously direct and accompany (on the organ) Fauré's Requiem and Poulenc's Gloria. (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. Nov. 17 at 3. Admission by contribution.)

Sine Nomine Singers—Harry Saltzman directs magnificats by Palestrina, Schütz, Praetorius, and Purcell (the last in the guise of an "Evening Service"), and madrigals by the late-Renaissance Italian Mannerists Giaches de Wert, Luca Marenzio, Gesualdo, and Monteverdi. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 17 at 3.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—George Cleve conducts a Mozart program that is unusual in its disposition toward the minor keys: the Symphony No. 40, in G Minor, and (with soloist Alfred Brendel) the composer's two minor-key piano concertos (in D Minor, K. 466, and in C Minor, K. 491). To lighten the mood a tad, Mr. Cleve has also programmed an early Symphony in G Major (K. 124). (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 17 at 7:30.)

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Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra—Carl Davis directs the orchestra, the Collegiate Chorale, the Boys Choir of Harlem, and soloists Barbara Bonney (soprano), Sally Burgess (mezzo-soprano), Jerry Hadley (tenor), and Willard White (bass) in "Paul McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio," a work that the ex-Beatle composed with help from Mr. Davis. Just who wrote what remains somewhat unclear, though the actual notation certainly fell to Mr. Davis—and will continue to in the event of future collaborations, since Mr. McCartney, discussing his musical illiteracy with *Newsweek* recently, declared "I'm happy to stay in this ignorant state." (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 18 at 8.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson conducts popular hits and Broadway tunes, with Mel Tormé lending his ageless baritone. A benefit concert. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 19 at 7:30.)

Les Arts Florissants—William Christie directs the Paris-based early-music group in Marc-Antoine Charpentier's celebrated Te Deum, as well as two of the composer's motets and a march for solo timpani by Jacques Philidor. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100 Nov. 20 at 8.)

Moscow Virtuosi—Vladimir Spivakov conducts Bach's Third Orchestral Suite, Mozart's Symphony No. 24, and Haydn's Symphony No. 94 (the "Surprise"), and doubles as violin soloist in Schnittke's "Sonata for Violin and Orchestra" (so called because it's actually a reworking, for chamber orchestra, of an earlier violin-and-piano sonata). (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 20 at 8.)

Music Today—Richard Fletcher conducts jazz-inspired works by George Antheil (his "Jazz Symphony"), Michael Torke, Gunther Schuller, and Tobias Picker (his "Keys to the City," featuring pianist Anthony de Mare). (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 20 at 8.)

RECITALS

The Hans Hollein Bösendorfer—Since the Austrian architect Hans Hollein received the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize, in 1985, his interests have extended to Italian watches, California lifeguard stations, and now—for the Viennese firm of Bösendorfer—a showpiece piano, sleek and inviting in the richness of its crimson, black, and gold. Since pianos should be heard, and not just seen, the instrument is currently being spotlighted in several concerts. Nov. 11: Pianist Paul Verona. . . . ¶ Nov. 15: Pianist Craig Urquhart. (Bösendorfer Center, 406 E. 79th St. 472-9799. Evenings at 8.)

John O'Conor—The Irish pianist performs Beethoven's "Diabelli Variations," as well as four impromptus by Schubert and three nocturnes by the early-nineteenth-century Irish composer John Field. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 12 at 5:45.)

Mikhail Yanovitsky—Pianist, in his New York début, performing Bach's "Goldberg Variations," Beethoven's last sonata (the C-Minor, Op. 111), and Scriabin's Fifth Sonata. (The program's not as long as it sounds; he's not taking the repeats in the Bach.) Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Nov. 12 at 8.)

Festival Chamber Music Society—Pianist David Oei, violinist Eriko Sato, cellist Ruth Sommers, and baritone Julian Long perform works by Mozart, Britten, Mendelssohn (his C-Minor Trio), and Ricky Ian Gordon. A benefit concert. (Bösendorfer Center, 406 E. 79th St. Nov. 13 at 8. For information about tickets, call 489-6039.)

Bargemusic—Pianist Edward Auer performs Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze," Op. 6; cellist Warren Lash joins him in the same composer's "Adagio and Allegro," Op. 70; and violinist Chin Kim comes aboard for Schubert's B-Flat Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 14 at 7:30 and Nov. 17 at 4.)

Guarneri Quartet—Performing string quartets by Mozart (in F Major, K. 168), Bartók (his second), and Debussy. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.). . . ¶ Performing string quartets by Haydn, Beethoven (his last, in F Major, Op. 135), and Brahms (in A Minor). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Nov. 16 at 8.). . . ¶ Performing quartets by Mozart (in C Major, K. 465), Tchaikovsky (in D Major, Op. 11), and (with the assistance of soprano Benita Valente) Schoenberg (his second). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 20 at 8.)

Julian Lloyd Webber—In an effort to demonstrate that musical talent may lurk in the Lloyd Webber genes after all, the cellist performs sonatas by Britten, Delius, and Rachmaninoff, as well as brief works by Fauré and Frank Bridge. Pianist John Lenehan assists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Pauline Oliveros—In this performance, the accordionist-composer presents several of her own works and some by her collaborators, baritone Thomas Buckner and percussionist George Marsh. Percussionist Jennifer Wilsey assists. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Musicians from Marlboro—A group of chamber musicians present string quintets by Boccherini and Dvořák, as well as an unpublished Saxophone Quintet written in about 1930 by Adolf Busch, a co-founder of the Marlboro Music Festival, in Vermont. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Dmitri Berlinsky—Anyone for a musical tea? A chamber-music salon has recently sprung up in this uptown locale, with performances featuring emerging musicians affiliated with the Young Concert Artists program. Violinist Berlinsky performs works by Vitali, Chausson, Paganini, and Prokofiev (his Sonata No. 2), assisted by pianist Benjamin Martin. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Nov. 15 at 5. No tickets necessary.)

Galimir String Quartet—Playing an abecedarium of minor-key quartets: in A Minor (by Schubert); in B Minor (by Prokofiev); and in C Minor (by Brahms). (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Nov. 15 at 8. No tickets necessary. . . . ¶ Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Nov. 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Christina Kiss—The pianist continues her survey of Liszt's solo-piano music by performing (among lesser-known works) the "Waldesrauschen" and "Gnomenreigen"

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			Aerosmith	Gems	44487
Julio Iglesias	Julio	38640	**James Taylor**	JT	34811
Johnny Mathis	Johnny's Greatest Hits	34667	**Sarah Vaughan**	Brazilian Romance	42519
Simon & Garfunkel	Sounds of Silence	09269	**Jaco Pastorius**	Jaco Pastorius	33949
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Ozzy Osbourne	No Rest for the Wicked	44245	**Stan Getz**	The Best of Two Worlds	33703
Quiet Riot	Mental Health	38443	**Placido Domingo**	Perhaps Love	37243
Ted Nugent	Ted Nugent	33692	**Branford Marsalis**	Romance For Saxophone	42122
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MUSIC-Cont'd

études, a pair of Hungarian Rhapsodies, and the Fantasia quasi Sonata "Après une lecture de Dante." (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Nov. 16 at 2.)

Polonaise Ensemble—A group of Polish musicians currently affiliated with American conservatories performs music by Beethoven, Szymanowski, Henryk Wieniawski, and Juliusz Zarebski (his Piano Quintet, Op. 34, written in 1885, the year he died, of consumption, at the age of thirty-one). Zarebski, who studied briefly with Liszt, recalls that composer in the technical skills and orchestral scope he demands in his keyboard writing, as well as through the incursions of folk-inspired modality into his harmonic vocabulary. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Nov. 17 at 2:45.)

JETHRO
TULL

Jethro Tull

Artek Ensemble—Gwendolyn Toth directs the early-instrument and vocal group in Neapolitan songs and dances from the seventeenth century. (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Nov. 17 at 3. For information about tickets, call 873-0473.)

Lysenko String Quartet—The Ukrainian foursome performs quartets by Beethoven (Op. 59, No. 3), Shostakovich (No. 3), and their namesake, Mykola Lysenko, as well as a piano quintet by Vasyl Barvynsky (with Laryssa Krupa). (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Nov. 17 at 4. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Presenting trios by Beethoven and Schubert, Martinů's Piano Quartet, and the première of Bruce Adolphe's "At the Still Point, There the Dance Is" (for clarinet and string quartet). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 17 at 5 and Nov. 19 at 7:30.)

Paderewski Celebration—The legendary Polish statesman-and-pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski made his Carnegie Hall début exactly a hundred years ago. Pianist Voytek Matushevski commemorates the occasion by performing several of Paderewski's compositions, a group of Chopin pieces that Paderewski performed in his 1891 début, his own fantasy on themes from Paderewski's opera "Manru," and works by such other pianist-composers as Moritz Moszkowski, Anton Rubinstein, and Theodor Leschetizky. A benefit concert. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 17 at 8.)

Chelsea Chamber Ensemble—Presenting works chosen as reflecting their composers' reactions to the atrocities of war: Debussy's Cello Sonata (1915), Messiaen's "Quartet for the End of Time" (1940), and Martinů's Nonet for Winds and Strings (1959). (Weill Recital Hall. Nov. 18 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Oleg Marshev—Pianist, performing sonatas by Haydn and Rachmaninoff, ten of Prokofiev's "Visions Fugitives" (Op. 22), and several works by Brahms (including the second book of his Variations on a Theme by Paganini). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Meridian Arts Ensemble—A brass quintet performs a twentieth-century program. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 19 at 8.)

Los Angeles Piano Quartet—Performing works by Beethoven, Brahms, and John Harbison (his "November 19, 1828," a musical rumination inspired by contemplating the death of Franz Schubert). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 20 at 8.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Jerry Garcia Band—Between trips as captain of the mighty starship Grateful Dead, lead guitarist Garcia takes this sporty unit out for a spin. A new live double album from last year's tour demonstrates that a song list covering numbers by Dylan, Los Lobos, the Beatles, the Band, and the Temptations provides a relaxed, wide-open setting for this sparkling soloist; it's the sharpest Dead-related release in fifteen years. The Garden seems a trifle overspacious as the venue for what is really just a bar band, but then you can't fit twenty thousand Deadheads on the head of a pin. Blues Traveler opens. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Paula Abdul—Paula Abdul's recent appearance on the MTV video-awards show, where she performed the song "Vibeology," from her platinum second album, "Spellbound," does not bode well for this tour (her first). The smoke and lights mistimed, the dancers misstepped, and the vocals (not all of them live) miscued—it was the out-of-synch nightmare that many a techno-pop star fears most. Abdul was Janet Jackson's choreographer before a few savvy record-company executives and producers decided to put catchy dance tunes behind her thin, untrained voice. They also put her in some big-budget music videos that gave the impression she was being fussed over like an old-time M-G-M star; MTV broadcast them incessantly, and she became a cash cow for her label, Virgin. If all the crying she's done on awards shows is any evidence, Abdul seems genuinely moved by her success. It's too bad she's got a machine as big as Miss Janet's chugging behind her. She can't possibly stoke it—science gone too far. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Nov. 17 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Nov. 18 at 7:30.)

Michael Bolton—Over the past few months, it seemed as if every record store in America was being hit by lawsuits from people who'd tripped over the massive displays of Michael Bolton's record "Time, Love & Tenderness." Luckily for him, it hasn't hurt sales (over a million so far). Bolton calls himself a soul singer—he used to call himself a heavy-metal rocker—but he's just a butch, long-hair-in-a-suit egomaniac who pounces on even the gentlest lyric. Presumably, this is his appeal. (His duet with Patti LaBelle, "We're Not Makin' Love Anymore," has to be heard to be believed.) His new single, the latest in a long line of classic soul covers, is "When a Man Loves a Woman." On it, his voice soars with about as much passion as Engelbert Humperdinck's on "Les Bicyclettes de Belsize." It'll give the dead chills. (Paramount, Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Nov. 19-20 at 8.)

Red Hot Chili Peppers—With Smashing Pumpkins and Pearl Jam. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Nov. 11-12 and Nov. 15-16 at 8.)

Jethro Tull—Paramount, Madison Square Garden. Nov. 11 at 8. . . . ¶ Nassau Coliseum. Nov. 14 at 7:30.

Rod Stewart—Nassau Coliseum. Nov. 12-13 at 8.

Dewey Redman—With Ed Blackwell, Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, Geri Allen, and Joshua Redman. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Nov. 14 at 8.)

Ken Peplowski Quartet—Featuring Howard Alden. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Nov. 15 at 6. Tickets at the door on the evening of the concert.)

Judy Collins—Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 15 at 8.

Batak Music of North Sumatra—Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 15 at 8.

Frank Sinatra—With Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme. (Nassau Coliseum. Nov. 15 at 8. . . . ¶ Madison Square Garden. Nov. 16 at 8.)

Eugene Chadbourne—With Tony Trischka, Leslie Ross, and Chris Turner. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. Nov. 15 at 9.)

"Heavenly Jazz"—Presenting Milt Hinton, Bucky Pizzarelli, Jane Jarvis, and Ken Peplowski. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Nov. 17 at 5. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Marisa Monte—Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Nov. 17 at 7:30.

"A Celebration of Bill Evans"—George Shearing, Joanne Brackeen, Barry Harris, and others. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5896. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Kenny Loggins—Town Hall. Nov. 19-20 at 8.

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Giants—Vs. the Dallas Cowboys, Nov. 17 at 4.

Rangers—Vs. the Pittsburgh Penguins, Nov. 11. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Capitals, Nov. 13. (Game time, 7:30.)

Islanders—Vs. the Rangers, Nov. 16 at 7:35.

Devils—Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Nov. 12 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Islanders, Nov. 14 at 7:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Winnipeg Jets, Nov. 16 at 1:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Capitals, Nov. 20 at 7:35.

Knicks—Vs. the Nets, Nov. 12 at 7:30.

Nets—Vs. the Utah Jazz, Nov. 13. . . . ¶ Vs. the Washington Bullets, Nov. 15. . . . ¶ Vs. the Sacramento Kings, Nov. 19. (Game time, 7:30.)

(The Giants play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111; the Rangers and Knicks at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Devils and Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . At the Meadowlands: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 7:30. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8, and Tuesdays at 1.

CHAMPIONSHIP—TENNIS

Virginia Slims Tournament—Seles, Graf, Sabatini, Navratilova, and Capriati, among others, battle for points in Madison Square Garden. The matches start on Nov. 18 at 5 and finish with the singles final, Nov. 24 at 12:30. For information about tickets, call 465-6500.

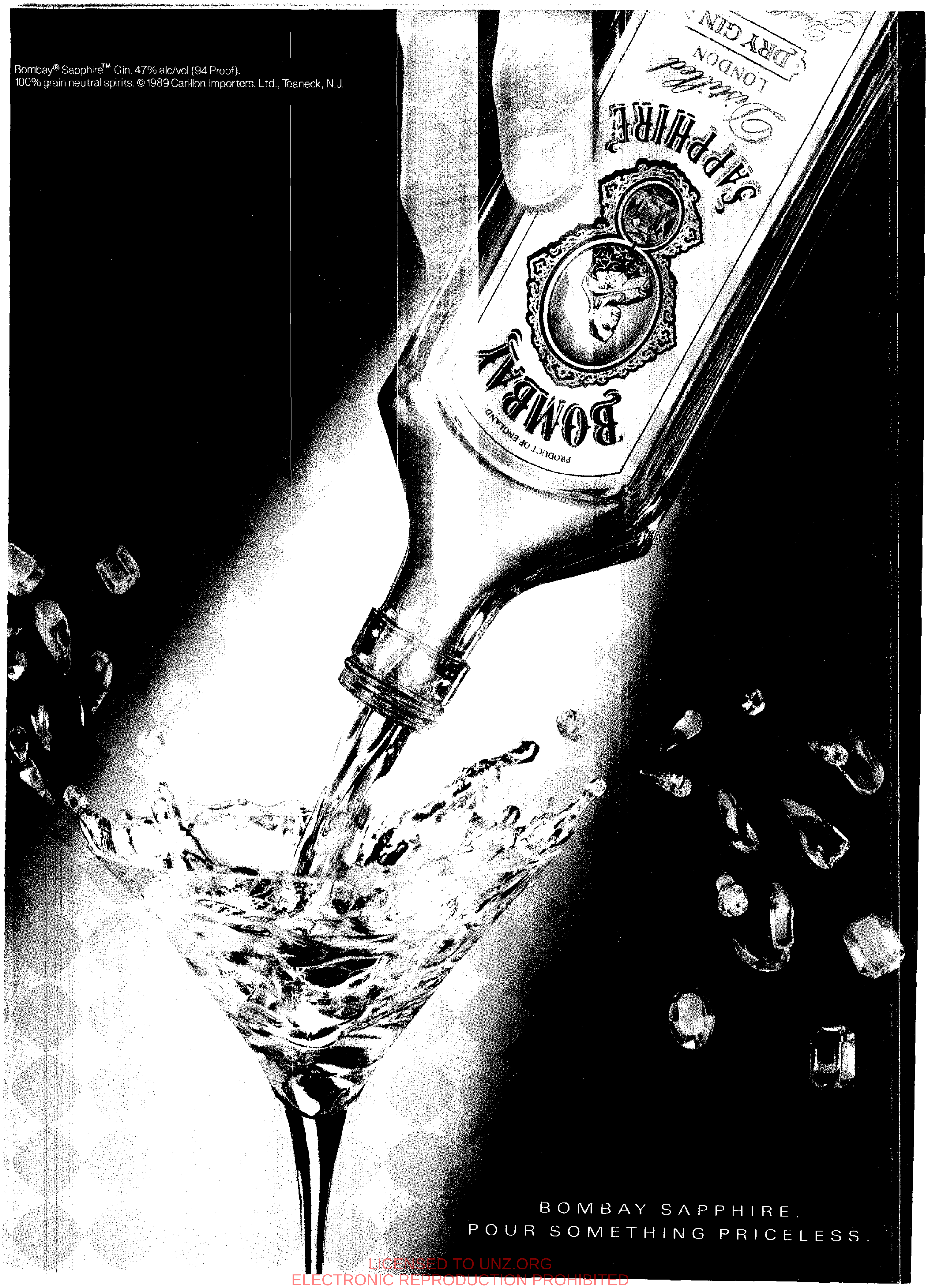
ABOVE AND BEYOND

Pet Expo—It's a zoo. It's a trade show. It's a networking opportunity for pet-industry insiders and family entertainment rolled into one event. Attractions include all the usual pets, plus llamas, rodents, a two-headed turtle, and a mountain lion named Bugsy; people who run pet-chauffeuring services; and people who fix up pet-owning singles. Please leave your own pets at home. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Nov. 14, from 6 P.M. to 10 P.M.; Nov. 15-16, from 11 to 10; and Nov. 17, from 11 to 6.)

Talks—Nov. 12 at 7: Dr. Ruth Westheimer talks about sex among college students. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 8: Maurice Sendak talks about his work, with the help of a slide show. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. For information about tickets, call 875-4124.). . . ¶ Nov. 18 at 6:30: John Noble Wilford talks about the Columbus thing. (New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St. 873-3400.). . . ¶ Nov. 18 at 8: Ellen Goodman, Deborah Glick, Madeleine Kunin, Carrie Saxon Perry, and Blandina Ramirez talk about the status of women in America. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.). . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 6: C. Everett Koop talks about public health. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about tickets, call 390-0571.)

Readings—Nov. 14 at 7: Jane Augustine, Barbara Guest, and others read from the poetry of H.D. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 6:30: Norman Mailer reads from "Harlot's Ghost."(Rizzoli Bookstore, 31 W. 57th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 2: Cid Corman reads from his own poetry and from the poetry of others. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Nov. 18 at 7: Martin Gilbert reads from his biography of Churchill. (Brentano's, Fifth Ave. at 48th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Nov. 18 at 8: Les Murray and Christopher Logue read from their own poetry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 6:30: Eqbal Ahmad, Agha Shahid Ali, and Naomi Lazard read, in English and in Urdu, from the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. No tickets necessary.)

Memorandum—The Triple Pier Antiques Show will be held Nov. 16, from 9 to 6, and Nov. 17, from 11 to 7, at Piers 88, 90, and 92 (which run along the Hudson River from 48th to 55th Sts.).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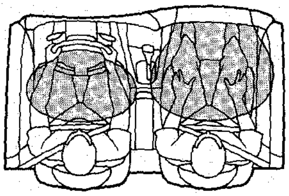

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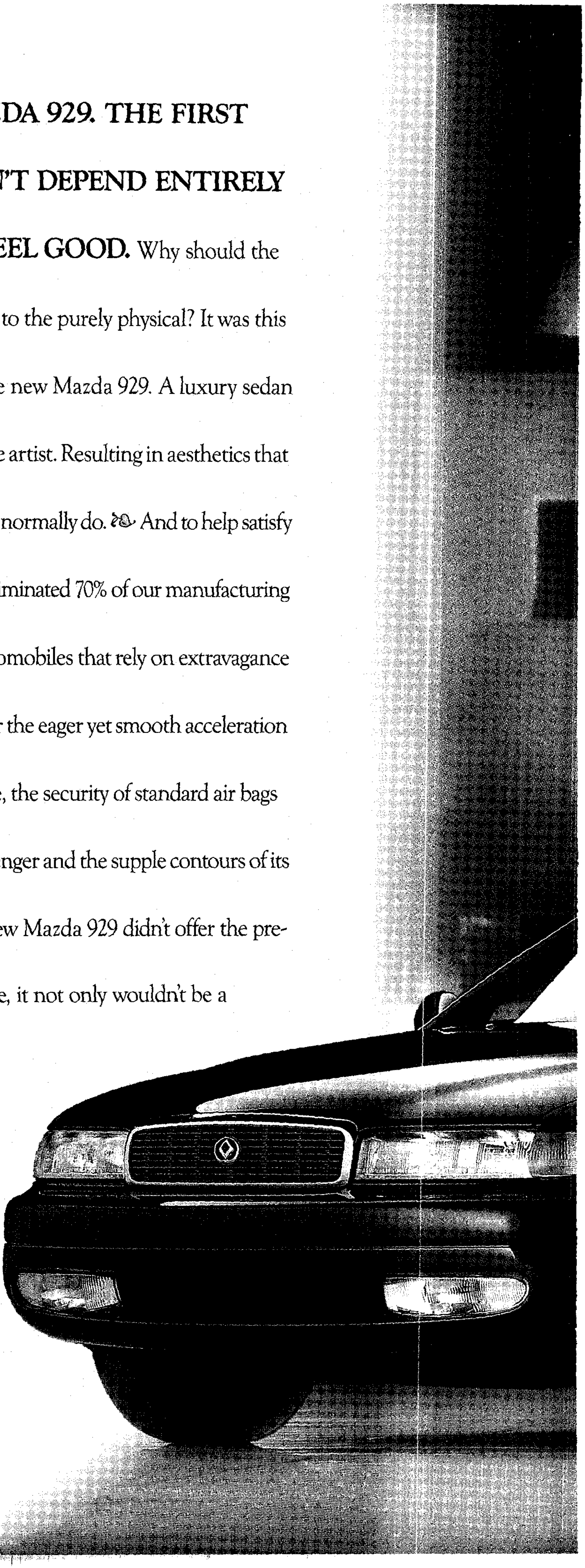

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 30.

Earl Schenck and Alla Nazimova in "Salome"

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 14: "The Boy Who Cried Bitch" (directed by Juan Jose Campanella), with Harley Cross and Karen Young. From Nov. 15: "Black Robe" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 14: "Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll" (†). From Nov. 15: "Prospero's Books" (Peter Greenaway), with John Gielgud.
Theatre 3: "The Rapture" (Michael Tolkin), with Mimi Rogers.
Theatre 4: "The Commitments" (†).
Theatre 5: "Exposure" (Walter Salles), with Amanda Pays, Peter Coyote, and Tcheky Karyo.
Theatre 6: "Life Is Sweet" (†).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Nov. 11: Theatre closed.
Nov. 12-13: "Paris, Texas" (1984, Wim Wenders), with Harry Dean Stanton, Nastassja Kinski, and Dean Stockwell; and "The State of Things" (1983, Wenders).
Nov. 14: Theatre closed.
From Nov. 15: "Revolution!" (Jeff Kahn), with Christopher Renstrom.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Ricochet" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Fisher King" (†).
Theatre 3: "29th Street" (George Gallo), with Danny Aiello, Anthony LaPaglia, and Lainie Kazan.

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Frankie & Johnny" (†).
Theatre 2: "Frankie & Johnny" (†)".
Theatre 3: "All I Want for Christmas" (Robert Lieberman), with Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, and Leslie Nielsen.
Theatre 4: "Strictly Business" (Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.
Theatre 5: "Other People's Money" (†).
Theatre 6: "Highlander 2: The Quickening" (Russell Mulcahy), with Christopher Lambert, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, and Sean Connery.
Theatre 7: "House Party 2" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Homicide" (†).
Theatre 2: "Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis.
Theatre 3: "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe" (†).
Theatre 4: "Homicide" (†).
Theatre 5: "Antonia and Jane" (Beeban Kidron), with Imelda Staunton and Saskia Reeves.
Theatre 6: "Year of the Gun" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Nov. 14: "The Story of Boys and Girls" (Pupi Avati, in Italian). From Nov. 15: "The Man in the Moon" (Robert Mulligan), with Sam Waterston, Tess Harper, and Gail Strickland.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Little Man Tate" (†).
Theatre 2: "Ricochet" (†).
Theatre 3: "Curly Sue" (John Hughes), with James Belushi, Kelly Lynch, and Alisan Porter.
Theatre 4: "The Butcher's Wife" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Fisher King" (†).
Theatre 6: "Dead Again" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Deceived" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through Nov. 14: "Highlander 2: The Quickening" (Russell Mulcahy), with Christopher Lambert, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, and Sean Connery.
From Nov. 15: "Cape Fear" (Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Nick Nolte, and Jessica Lange.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 14: "Shattered" (Wolfgang Petersen), with Tom Berenger, Bob Hoskins, Greta Scacchi, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, and Corbin Bernsen. From Nov. 15: "The Man in the Moon" (Robert Mulligan), with Sam Waterston, Tess Harper, and Gail Strickland.
Theatre 2: "Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis.
Theatre 3: "Year of the Gun" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Commitments" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Other People's Money" (†).
Theatre 2: "Frankie & Johnny" (†).
Theatre 3: "Strictly Business" (Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"All I Want for Christmas" (Robert Lieberman), with Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, and Leslie Nielsen.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Nov. 14: "Curly Sue" (John Hughes), with James Belushi, Kelly Lynch, and Alisan Porter.
From Nov. 15: "The Man in the Moon" (Robert Mulligan), with Sam Waterston, Tess Harper, and Gail Strickland.

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "Year of the Gun" (†).
Theatre 2: "Homicide" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"29th Street" (George Gallo), with Danny Aiello, Anthony LaPaglia, and Lainie Kazan.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"My Own Private Idaho" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Business" (Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.
Theatre 2: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Rambling Rose" (†).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 12: "Highlander 2: The Quickening" (Russell Mulcahy), with Christopher Lambert, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, and Sean Connery. From Nov. 13: "Cape Fear" (Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Nick Nolte, and Jessica Lange.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 12: "The Butcher's Wife" (†). From Nov. 13: "Cape Fear."

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 12: "Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis. From Nov. 13: "Beauty and the Beast," a Walt Disney animated film.
Theatre 2: Through Nov. 12: "Antonia and Jane" (Beeban Kidron), with Imelda Staunton and Saskia Reeves. From Nov. 13: "Billy Bathgate."
Theatre 3: Through Nov. 12: "Paradise" (Mary Agnes Donoghue), with Melanie Griffith, Don Johnson, and Elijah Wood. From Nov. 13: "Antonia and Jane."

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "The Fisher King" (†).
Theatre 2: "All I Want for Christmas" (Robert Lieberman), with Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, and Leslie Nielsen.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Black Robe" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Frankie & Johnny" (†).
Theatre 2: "Little Man Tate" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Overseas" (Brigitte Roüan; in French), with Nicole Garcia, Marianne Basler, and Roüan.

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Other People's Money" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Frankie & Johnny" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "House Party 2" (†).
Theatre 2: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Business" (Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.
Theatre 2: "Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 12: "The Architecture of Doom" (1989, directed by Peter Cohen), a documentary. Nov. 13-19: "Images of the World and the Inscription of War" (1988, Harun Farocki). From Nov. 20: "Uncle Moses" (1932, Sidney Goldin and Aubrey Scotto; in Yiddish), with Maurice Schwartz.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "The Wages of Fear" (1953, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French), with Yves Montand, Charles Vanel, Folco Lulli, and Peter Van Eyck.

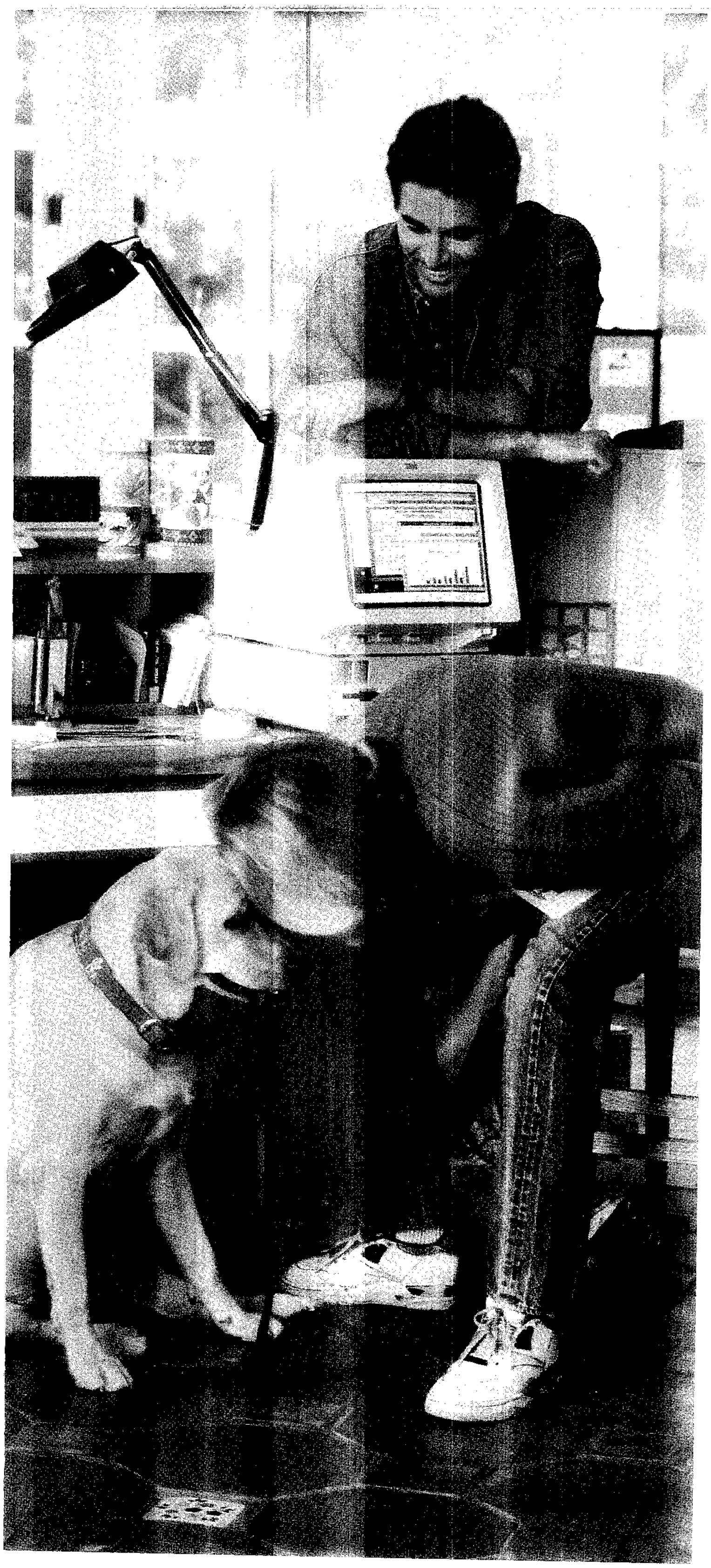
Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "My Own Private Idaho" (†).
Theatre 2: "My Own Private Idaho" (†).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"The Looney Tunes Hall of Fame."

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "The Butcher's Wife" (†).
Theatre 2: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Rambling Rose" (†).
Theatre 2: "My Mother's Castle" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca; and "My Father's Glory" (Robert, in French), with Ciamaca.
Theatre 3: "Whore" (Ken Russell), with Theresa Russell.
Theatre 4: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Frankie & Johnny" (†).
Theatre 2: "Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis.
Theatre 3: "City of Hope" (†).
Theatre 4: "Strictly Business" (Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.
Theatre 5: "All I Want for Christmas" (Robert Lieberman), with Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, and Leslie Nielsen.



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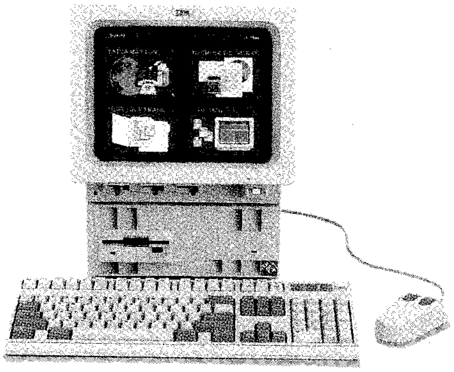

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MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Theatre 6: "Homicide" (†).
Theatre 7: "Other People's Money" (†).
Theatre 8: "Highlander 2: The Quickening" (Russell Mulcahy), with Christopher Lambert, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, and Sean Connery.
Theatre 9: "29th Street" (George Gallo), with Danny Aiello, Anthony LaPaglia, and Lainie Kazan.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Year of the Gun" (†).
Theatre 2: "House Party 2" (†).
Theatre 3: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"All I Want for Christmas" (Robert Lieberman), with Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, and Leslie Nielsen.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.
Theatre 2: "Rambling Rose" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Fisher King" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Nov. 14: "Shattered" (Wolfgang Petersen), with Tom Berenger, Bob Hoskins, Greta Scacchi, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, and Corbin Bernsen. From Nov. 15: "And You Thought Your Parents Were Weird" (Tony Cookson), with Joshua Miller, Edan Gross, Marcia Strassman, and Sam Behrens.
Theatre 5: "The Rapture" (Michael Tolkin), with Mimi Rogers.
Theatre 6: "Curly Sue" (John Hughes), with James Belushi, Kelly Lynch, and Alisan Porter.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"The Commitments" (†).

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Dead Again" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
Through Nov. 14: "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe" (†).
From Nov. 15: "Prospero's Books" (Peter Greenaway), with John Gielgud.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Barton Fink" (†).
Theatre 2: "Homicide" (†).

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
Nov. 11-12: Theatre closed.
Nov. 13-14: "The Man in the Moon" (Robert Mulligan), with Sam Waterston, Tess Harper, and Gail Strickland.
From Nov. 15: "Meeting Venus" (István Szabó), with Glenn Close and Niels Arestrup.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Shattered" (Wolfgang Petersen), with Tom Berenger, Bob Hoskins, Greta Scacchi, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, and Corbin Bernsen.

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"All I Want for Christmas" (Robert Lieberman), with Harley Jane Kozak, Jamey Sheridan, Ethan Randall, Kevin Nealon, Thora Birch, and Leslie Nielsen.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Year of the Gun" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "City of Hope" (†).
Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).
Theatre 3: "La Belle Noiseuse" (Jacques Rivette, in French), with Michel Piccoli, Emmanuelle Béart, and Jane Birkin.

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"29th Street" (George Gallo), with Danny Aiello, Anthony LaPaglia, and Lainie Kazan.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis.
Theatre 2: "The Fisher King" (†).
Theatre 3: "Other People's Money" (†).
Theatre 4: "Curly Sue" (John Hughes), with James Belushi, Kelly Lynch, and Alisan Porter.
Theatre 5: "Little Man Tate" (†).
Theatre 6: "Frankie & Johnny" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Strictly Business" (Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.
Theatre 2: "Highlander 2: The Quickening" (Russell Mulcahy), with Christopher Lambert, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, and Sean Connery.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.
Theatre 2: "House Party 2" (†).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "House Party 2" (†).
Theatre 2: Theatre closed.
Theatre 3: "Other People's Money" (†).
Theatre 4: "Ricochet" (†).
Theatre 5: "House Party 2" (†).
Theatre 6: "Strictly Business" (directed by Kevin Hooks), with Tommy Davidson, Joseph C. Phillips, and Halle Berry.

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Billy Bathgate" (Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman, Nicole Kidman, Steven Hill, Loren Dean, and Bruce Willis.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Little Man Tate" (†).
Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 3: "Deceived" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Frankie & Johnny" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through Nov. 14: "Highlander 2: The Quickening" (Russell Mulcahy), with Christopher Lambert, Virginia Madsen, Michael Ironside, and Sean Connery. From Nov. 15: "Cape Fear" (Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Nick Nolte, and Jessica Lange.
Theatre 2: "The People Under the Stairs" (Wes Craven), with Brandon Adams, Everett McGill, Wendy Robie, and A. J. Langer.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
"Dial M for Murder" (1954, directed by Alfred Hitchcock), with Ray Milland, Grace Kelly, Robert Cummings, Anthony Dawson, and John Williams.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Nov. 11: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst; in German), with Lotte Lenya; and "The Blue Angel" (1929, Josef von Sternberg; in German), with Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, and Hans Albers.
Nov. 12: "Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon" (1943, Roy William Neill), with Basil Rathbone, Nigel Bruce, and Lionel Atwill; and "The Woman in Green" (1945, Neill), with Rathbone and Bruce.
Nov. 13: "Jezebel" (1938, William Wyler), with Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, George Brent, and Fay Bainter; and "The Letter" (1940, Wyler), with Davis, Herbert Marshall, James Stephenson, Frieda Inescort, and Gale Sondergaard.
Nov. 14: "The Man Who Knew Too Much" (1934, Alfred Hitchcock), with Leslie Banks, Edna Best, Pierre Fresnay, and Peter Lorre; and "Secret Agent" (†).
Nov. 15-16: "Five Easy Pieces" (1970, Bob Rafelson), with Jack Nicholson; and "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper), with Peter Fonda, Hooper, and Nicholson.
Nov. 17: "All Screwed Up" (†); and "Seduced and Abandoned" (1964, Pietro Germi; in Italian).
Nov. 18: "Hour of the Wolf" (1968, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Max von Sydow and Liv Ullmann; and "The Passion of Anna" (1970, Bergman; in Swedish), with Ullmann, Bibi Andersson, von Sydow, and Erland Josephson.
Nov. 19: "The Big Heat" (†); and "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" (1956, Fritz Lang), with Dana Andrews and Joan Fontaine.
Nov. 20: "Alphaville" (†) and "Le Gai Savoir" (†).

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Nov. 11 at 2:30: "Il Vigile" (1960, directed by Luigi Zampa; in Italian), with Vittorio De Sica, Alberto Sordi, and Marisa Merlini. . . . ¶ Nov. 11 at 3 and 6: A program of animated films by Shamus Culhane. . . . ¶ Nov. 11 at 6: "The Garden of the Finzi-Continis" (1970, De Sica; in Italian), with Lino Capolicchio, Dominique Sanda, and Helmut Berger. . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 2:30: "A Brief Vacation" (1973, De Sica; in Italian), with Florinda Bolkan, Renato Salvatori, and Daniel Quenaud. . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 2:30 and Nov. 17 at 5: "The Dybbuk" (1938, Machael Waszynski; in Yiddish). . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 3 and 6: "Jareena: Portrait of a Hijda" (1990, Prem Kalliat) and "Diamond Market: The World of Iqbal Hussain" (1990, Arlette Girardot and Michel Kania), both *documentaries*. . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 6 and Nov. 17 at noon: "Menakhem Mendl" (1925, Alexander Granovsky; a Russian silent film, with English intertitles). . . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 2:30: "Yiddish: The Mame-Loshn" (1979, Pierre Sauvage). . . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 3 and 6, Nov. 16-17 at 2:30 and 5, and Nov. 18 at 3: Four different programs of short films by Viking Eggeling and others. . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 6 and Nov. 16 at 2: "Uncle Moses" (1932, Sidney Goldin and Aubrey Scotto; in Yiddish), with Maurice Schwartz. . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 5 and Nov. 18 at *2:30: "Yiddle with His Fiddle" (1937,* Joseph Green; in Yiddish), with Molly Picon. . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 2 and Nov. 18 at 6: "His Wife's Lover" (1931, Goldin; in Yiddish), with Ludwig Satz. . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at *2:30* and 6: "Black and White" (1991, Boris Frumin), with Elena Shevchenko and Gilbert Giles. . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at 2:30: "Seeds of Freedom" (1928, Grigori Roshal; a Russian silent film, with English intertitles), with Yuri Untershlak. . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at 6: "A Vilna Legend" (1933, George Roland and Zygmund Turkow; in Yiddish).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Nov. 13 at 6: "Entuziasm" (1931, Dziga Vertov). . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 8: "Perfumed Nightmare" (1978, Kidlat Tahimik). . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 10: "Ava and Gabriel" (1990, Felix de Rooy). . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 6: "Three Songs About Lenin" (1934, Vertov). . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 8: "The Salt Mines" (1990, Susana Aiken and Carlos Aparicio). . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 10: "Some Divine Wind" (1991, Roddy Bogawa). . . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 7: "Full Moon Over New York" (1990, Stanley Kwan). . . . ¶ Nov. 15-16 at 8 and 10: Two *programs of short films shown under the title* "Films from the Lost Continent of Atlantis." . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 9: "Masala" (1991, Srinivas Krishna). . . . ¶ Nov. 15 at 11: "Border Brujo" (1990, Isaac Artenstein) and "Once Upon a Time in the Bronx" (1991, Ela Troyano). . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 5: "The Suitors" (1988, Ghasem Ebrahimain). . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 7: "A Door to the Sky" (1990, Farida Ben Lyazid). . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 9: "Plastic Jesus" (1971, Lazar Stojanovic). . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 11: "Tea in the Harem" (1986, Mehdi Charef). . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 3: "Farewell to False Paradise" (1988, Tefvik Baser). . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 5: "The Razor's Edge" (1985, Jocelyn Saab). . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 7: "Testament" (1988, John Akomfrah). . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 9: "Camp de Thiaroye" (1987, Ousmane Sembene and Thierno Faty Sow). . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 6: A program of films by women from the Philippines. . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 8: A program of six *short avant-garde Swedish films.*

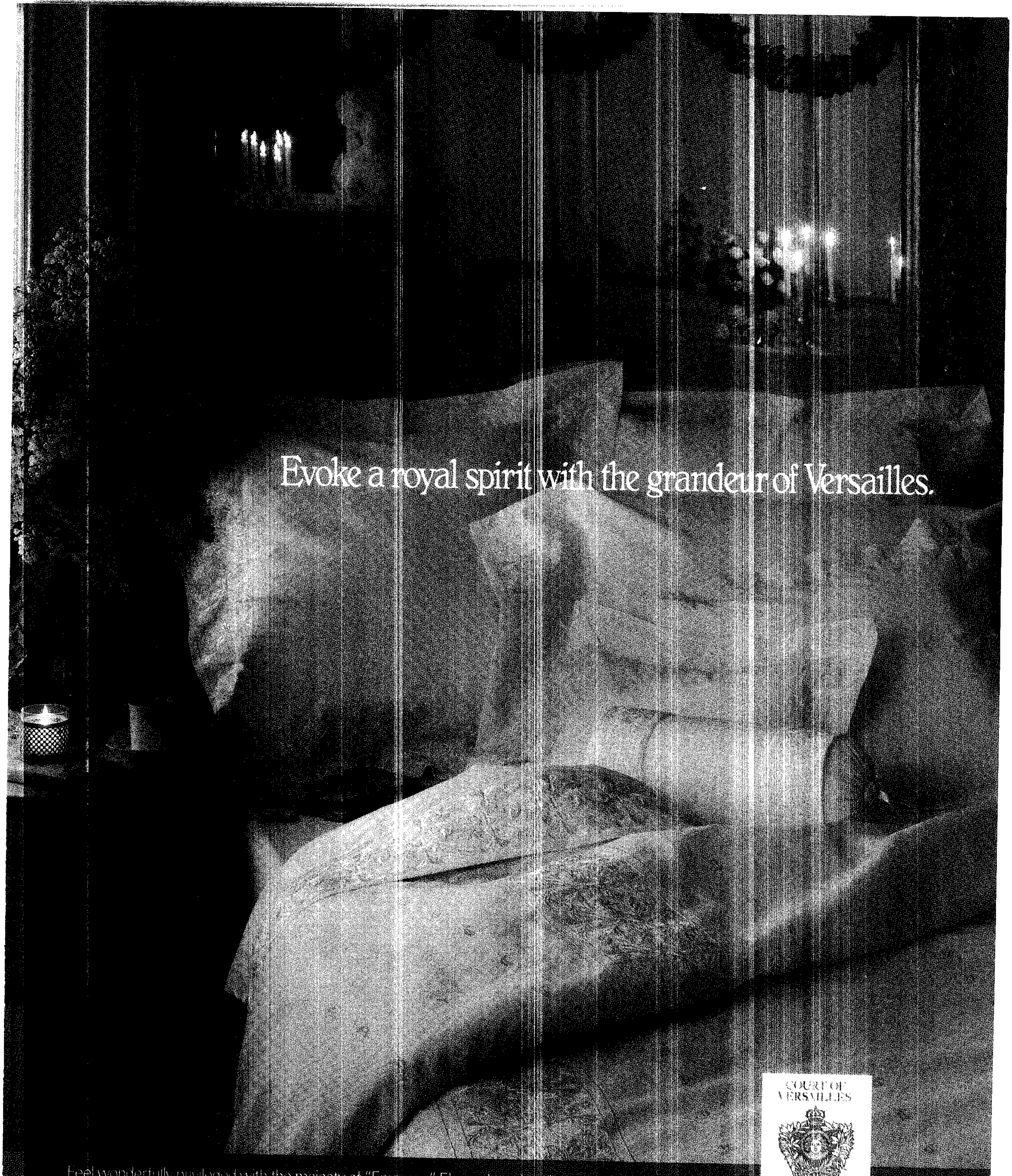
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Nov. 13 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Tatie Danielle" (1991, Etienne Chatiliez; in French), with Tsilla Chelton. . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Paper Wedding" (1989, Michel Brault; in French), with Geneviève Bujold, Manuel Aranguiz, Dorothée Berryman, and Monique Lepage.

Donnell Library Center, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—Nov. 16 at 2:30: "The Yellow Submarine" (1968, George Dunning), a full-length animated cartoon of the Beatles. . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at noon: "The Empire Strikes Back" (1980, Irvin Kershner), with Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams, and Alec Guinness.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718-784-0077)—Nov. 16 at 2: "Stronger Than Death" (1920, Herbert Blanche; silent), with Alla Nazimova and Charles Bryant. . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 4: "Camille" (1921, Ray C. Smallwood; silent), with Rudolph Valentino and Nazimova. . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 2: "Salome" (†). . . . ¶ Nov. 17 at 4: "Mare Nostrum" (1926, Rex Ingram; silent), with Alice Terry and Antonio Moreno.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Selections from Jack Benny's appearances on his own weekly television show and in specials. Showings Tuesdays and Wednesdays at noon and 4, Thursdays and Fridays at noon, 4, and 6, and Saturdays and Sundays at noon and 4.

92nd Street Y, Lexington at 92nd St. (996-1100)—Nov. 13 at 7:45: "Voyager," with Sam Shepard, Julie Delpy, and Barbara Sukowa. The director, Volker Schlöndorff, will be present. . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 7:45: "Tootsie" (†). The director, Sydney Pollack, will be present.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IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Goldie Hawn in "Deceived"

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

All Screwed Up (1974)—Lina Wertmüller finished this film early in 1974, just before starting "Swept Away." It's a noisy, sprawling, incident-filled, slice-of-life comedy-melodrama about the corruption of the Sicilians who go to Milan. Several aspects of the film, such as its poignant hero, Carletto (Nino Bignamini), and the scene showing the monotonous dehumanization of labor, are reminiscent of René Clair's "À Nous la Liberté" (which also influenced Chaplin's "Modern Times"). But Wertmüller's point of view is chaotic. The women workers are shown as tightfisted petit-bourgeois schemers who manipulate and exploit their likable proletarian men, and there's a ballet in a slaughterhouse, which has comic bravura but is so ambiguous that we seem to be asked to laugh at the dead animals. Lina Polito, who was the dark Tripolina in "Love and Anarchy," is here thin and blond as the lovely Mariuccia, who has quintuplets; Isa Danieli is the dark, soft-faced Elizabeth Taylor type who turns prostitute. Cinematography by Giuseppe Rotunno. In Italian.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 17.)

Alphaville (1965)—Jean-Luc Godard ventures into science fiction, with mixed results. The picture is brilliant, yet it's no good. Godard found enough of the future in present-day Paris to create a vision of a new world without constructing sets; it's a sleek, dark, glittering society—at first, the dehumanization is funny and alluring and a little eerie. The modern corridors and ramps and the flickering lights suggest something almost supernaturally impersonal. But the people of Alphaville are ruled by a giant computer, and soullessness can be very monotonous. The movie was shot at night, and it seems to give off powerfully soporific vapors, especially since the comic-strip story is an uninspired mixture of sci-fi and private eye that never takes hold. With Eddie Constantine as cool, tough Lemmy Caution (his face is so tired and leathery he's like an old shoe); Anna Karina (she's the most radiant of robots); and Akim Tamiroff. Written and directed by Godard. In French.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 20.)

Barton Fink—The Coen brothers' macabre comedy about a blocked writer in 1941 Hollywood is densely packed with allusions, clever dialogue, ingenious visual jokes, startling plot twists, and imaginative atmospheric effects, yet it feels thin. It's an empty tour de force, and what's dismaying about the picture is that the filmmakers (Joel Coen directed, Ethan Coen produced, and they wrote the script together) seem inordinately pleased with its hermetic meaninglessness. Fink (John Turturro), the protagonist, is a left-wing New York playwright—obviously based on Clifford Odets—who signs a contract to write screenplays in Hollywood. His first assignment is a wrestling picture for Wallace Beery. He can't get started on it: he sits in his seedy, depressing hotel room, stares at the typewriter, and feels defeated. The Coens treat this emblematic figure of thirties culture with merciless contempt. They quickly expose him as a phony, a buffoon, and a talentless hack, and then spend the rest of the movie punishing him. The picture is designed to visit ever more grotesque indignities on a character who's pitiful from the outset; there's not much fun in that. And there's no fun at all in Turturro's hyperactive performance: the way he plays this leftist intellectual, the movie might as well have been called "The Nutty Pinko." The Coens' interests are purely academic, and their prankish formalism becomes very irritating in the course of the picture. Also with John Goodman, Michael Lerner, John Mahoney, Judy Davis, and Tony Shalhoub. The movie won awards for best picture, best director, and best actor (Turturro) at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/9/91.) (Carnegie Hall Cinemas)

The Big Heat (1953)—Sidney Boehm's solid, hard-nosed script might have been made into a routine cops-and-robbers thriller, but the director, Fritz Lang, gave it a formalized style. The movie is all of a piece; it's designed in light and shadows, and its underworld atmosphere glistens with the possibilities of sadism—this is a definitive film noir, with a few stunningly choreographed nasty scenes. Glenn Ford is Dave Bannion, a police lieutenant who ignores the orders of his superiors and investigates a big-time gangster (Alexander Scourby). A bomb is planted in Bannion's car, and his wife (Jocelyn Brando) is blown up. Full of hate, Bannion leaves the department to find revenge. When one of the gangster's henchmen (Lee Marvin) throws scalding coffee at his mistress, a high-living tough-girl lush (Gloria Grahame), and she wants vengeance, too, she joins up with Bannion. And the film accumulates corpses and arrests. With Carolyn Jones and Dan Seymour. From a novel by William P. McGivern; cinematography by Charles Lang, Jr.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 19.)

Black Robe—With Lothaire Bluteau, directed by Bruce Beresford. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Beekman. . . . ¶ Angelika Film Center; starting Nov. 15.)

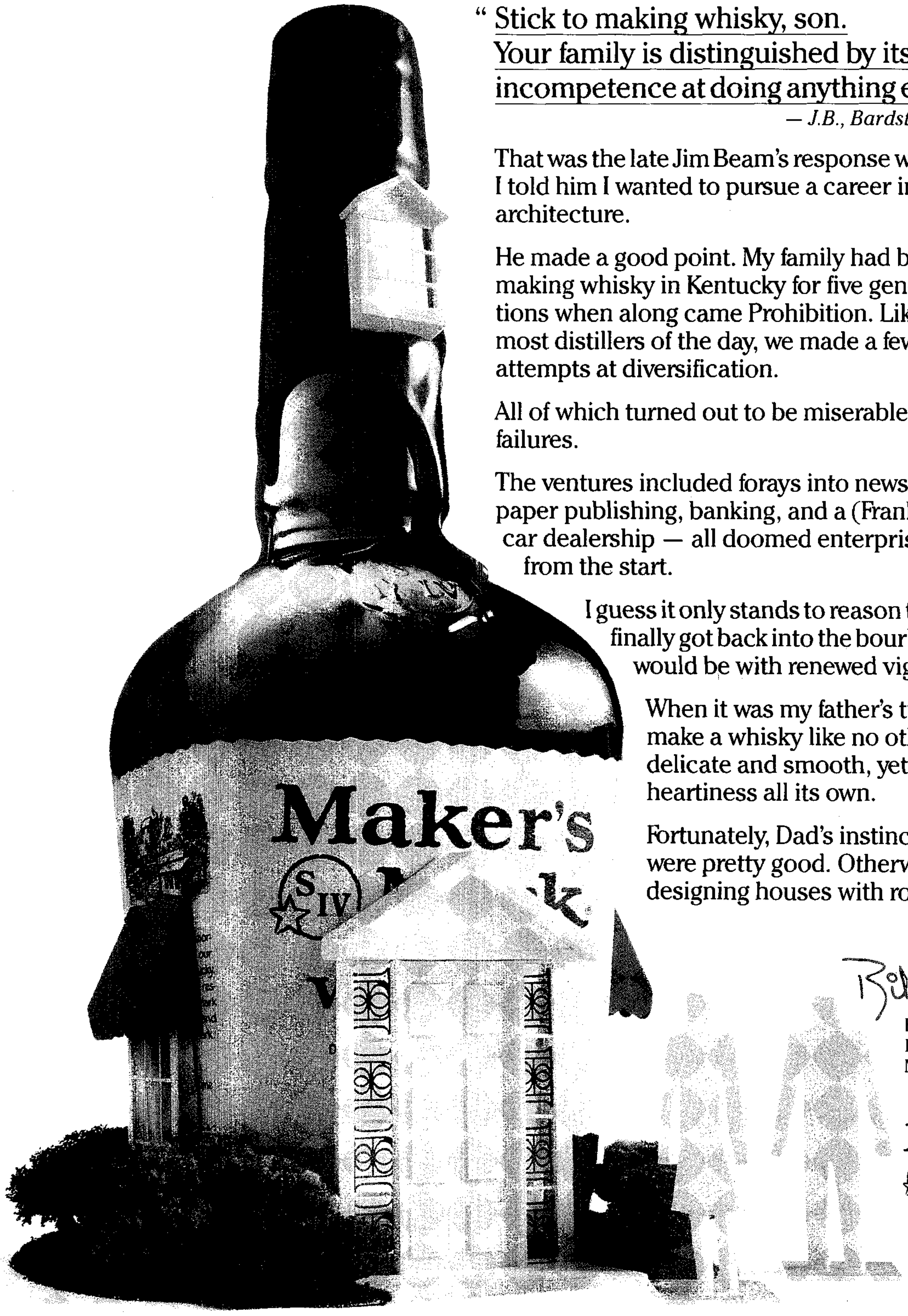
The Butcher's Wife—This slow-building, erratic, genial romantic comedy has been promoted as an heir to "Ghost," simply because it stars Demi Moore as a North Carolina clairvoyant. She misreads one of her own dreams, marries a New York City butcher (George Dzundza), and promptly falls for the psychiatrist across the street (Jeff Daniels). But it's Daniels and the supporting cast—including Margaret Colin, Max Perlich, Mary Steenburgen, and Miriam Margolyes—who light up the movie like birthday candles circling a dull white cake. Daniels gives a marvellously instinctive performance as a super-analytic man in love with a supernatural woman: he physicalizes cerebral tension, at one moment threatening to roll his head a full three hundred and sixty degrees. The romance is about accepting magic as part of life, especially the magic of true love. The comedy is about seeing the potential craziness in self-examination. Christopher Durang embodies that theme hilariously as a patient of Daniels' who neatly reverses their therapeutic roles. The director, Terry Hughes, is sometimes hokey and awkward, but he creates an atmosphere in which anything outlandish can happen—and does. Ezra Litwak and Marjorie Schwartz wrote the script; Frank Tidy did the cinematography.—M.S. (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Art Greenwich Twin. . . . ¶ Coronet; through Nov. 12.)

City of Hope—This panorama of Northeastern urban life is filled with intrigue and conflict. Yet it plays as if it were still on the drawing board. The writer, director, and editor, John Sayles, lays out the action so that every class and ethnic group participates in the corruption and the possible redemption of fictional Hudson City, New Jersey. In the major plot developments, a white professor is accused of having sexually approached one of two black kids who mugged him, and an urban-renewal project leads to arson and death. Sayles sketches the racial and economic agitations that leave the city in a state of tense inertia. The naturalistic design doesn't allow the three dozen characters to spring to unruly, independent life. Nick (Vincent Spano), the morally drifting son of the city's major contractor, is a poor choice for a unifying hero. He's unspecific and archetypal—an overgrown, mixed-up kid. In keeping with today's delayed maturity cycle, he's twenty-eight, not eighteen. The enormous cast includes Joe Morton, Tony LoBianco, Barbara Williams, and Josh Mostel.—M.S. (Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza.)

The Commitments—Alan Parker's film is a loose, friendly musical comedy about the brief career of an Irish soul band. The Commitments are the brainchild of an energetic young music enthusiast named Jimmy Rabbitte (Robert Arkins), who lives in a poor Dublin neighborhood. He puts together a ten-piece group that learns, eventually, to play precise and spirited versions of soul classics in the Memphis style. The music of the Commitments isn't original, but that doesn't prevent it from being enormously entertaining: the band's hard-won proficiency charms us. Parker concentrates on the day-to-day details of rehearsals and performances; he seems to revel in the complexity of the group's musical, emotional, and sexual interactions, and he does full comic justice to the petty irritations of life in a band. What holds the Commitments together is a combination of Jimmy's ingenuity, their common pleasure in making music, and the daily challenge of responding to their fellow band members' provocations with quick, profane humor. The kids' verbal sparring is another kind of music—maybe the true sound of Dublin soul. Until the last half hour, when the direction gets a little pushy, the picture has an offhand, unassuming grace. Most of the Commitments are played by young Dublin musicians who answered a casting-call advertisement. They're a vivacious and spontaneous crew. The screenplay is by Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, and Roddy Doyle, from Doyle's novel. The songs are great—chosen, with unusual intelligence, from the repertoires of Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, and other soul giants.—T.R. (8/26/91) (Angelika Film Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Dead Again—This murder mystery, directed by Kenneth Branagh from a wildly complicated screenplay by Scott Frank, wears its inanity on its sleeve. It shuttles breezily between the present day, in which an L.A. detective named Mike Church (Branagh) is trying to discover the identity of an attractive amnesiac (Emma Thompson), and the late forties, in which a European composer and conductor (also Branagh) may or may not have murdered his pianist wife (also Thompson). These stories are, of course, connected: the amnesiac might even be a reincarnation of the conductor's wife, stabbed to death with a pair of scissors forty years earlier. Branagh makes no attempt to disguise the script's preposterousness. He revels in it, both as actor and as director. The mood of the picture is both frivolous and spooky, and the suspense often seems a function of sheer giddiness: as the movie dances, with drunken insouciance, toward the simultaneous climaxes of its two stories, the tension we feel is partly fear that Branagh won't be able to maintain his precarious balance. Finally, the picture does come crashing down. When it's time to wrap up the mystery, the movie leaves too many of the plot's enigmas unresolved, and Branagh's insouciance loses its charm. Also with Derek Jacobi, Andy Garcia, Hanna Schygulla, and (in a hilarious cameo) Robin Williams.—T.R. (9/9/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Loews Festival.)

Deceived—Goldie Hawn gives her most emotional performance in years as a wife who suspects her husband (John Heard) of philandering, chicanery, and worse. Hawn's ma-



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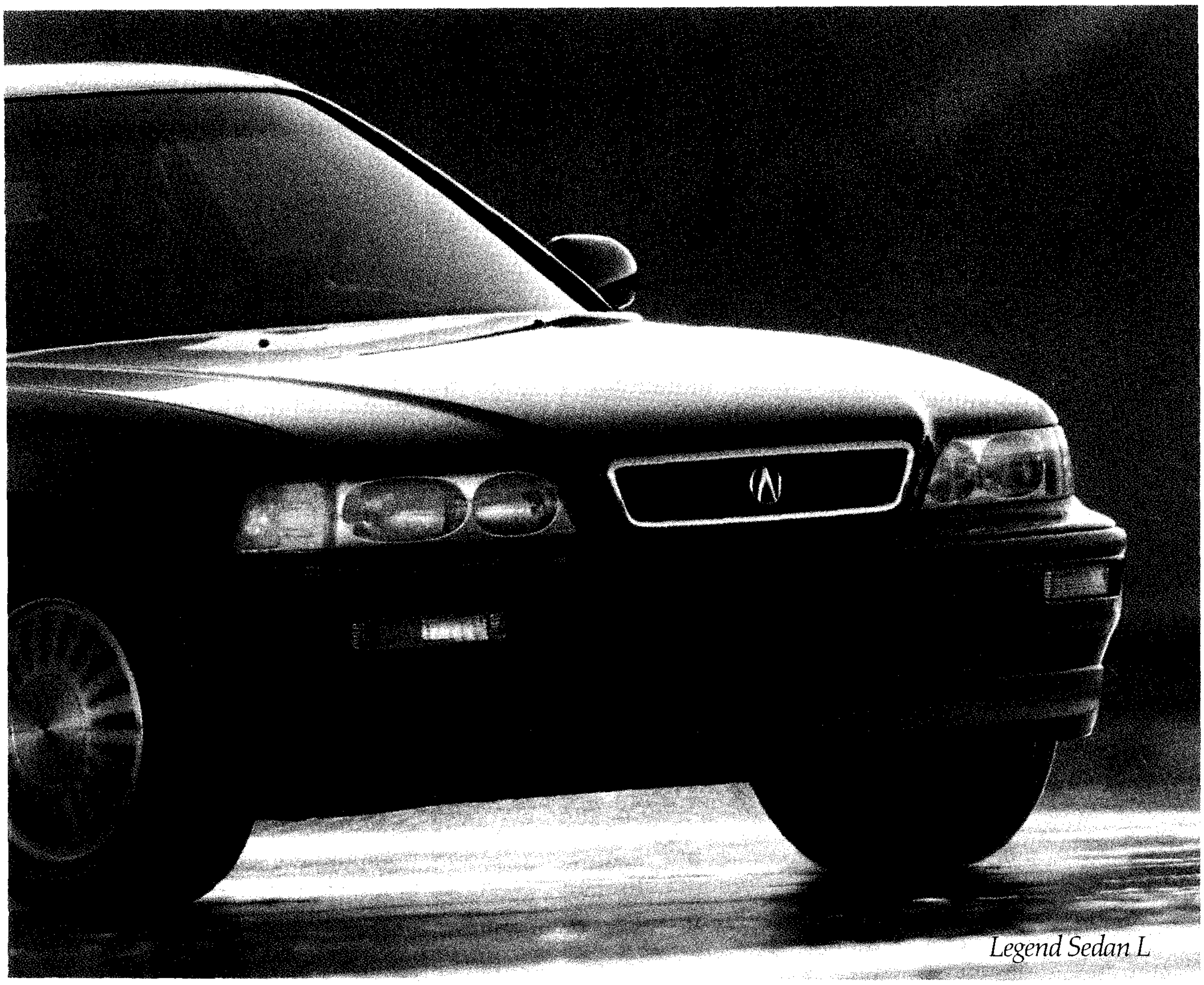

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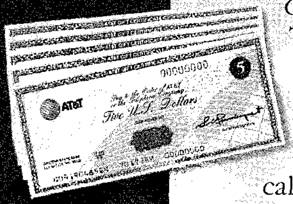

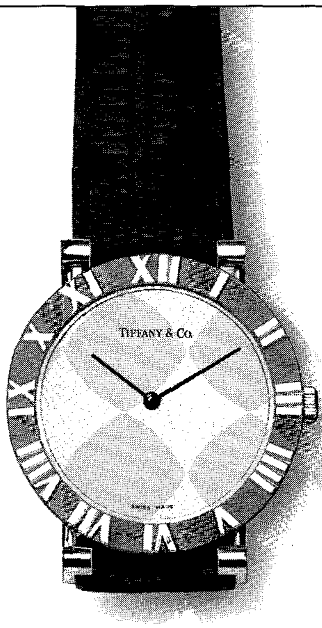

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turity is less a revelation than a delayed proof of the gifts her fans have known she's been keeping under wraps. When she expresses her doubts, anxieties, and sexual quaverings, her empathic and comic powers intensify. The film is only half a good thriller. It's tense and involving when the heroine is figuring out her husband's real identity. Then she makes one dumb move after another. As she loses her poise, the plot loses its sense. Still, the director, Damian Harris, does a smooth job of navigating the action's fresh antique-art milieu, and there's a clever parody scene of kiddie-whipped adults. Mary Agnes Donoghue and Derek Saunders wrote the script, from a story by Donoghue.—M.S. (Gramercy, and Embassy.)

EUROPA EUROPA—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness. By the time he is initiated into the Hitler Youth, he has already run through several identities, and has proved himself capable of playing his roles with conviction and enthusiasm. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. Also with Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska, and Rene Hofschneider. The real Salomon Perel appears, as himself, in the movie's final scene. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Lincoln Plaza.)

THE FISHER KING—This one-hundred-and-thirty-seven-minute endurance test is the story of a former New York City "shock jock" (Jeff Bridges) who befriends a schizoid former medievalist (Robin Williams) and joins his quest for the Holy Grail. The gonzo filigree of the director, Terry Gilliam, surrounds this fable of redemption with pseudo-originality. The allusion-mongering of the writer, Richard LaGravenese, gives it delusions of grandeur. At heart, the film is no different from a whole string of Hollywood movies centering on mysterious madmen who may be legendary heroes. As usual for this drippy kind of film, Williams' throwback character, Parry—short for Parsifal—is supposed to inspire everybody with his virtuous whimsies. But Gilliam doesn't know how to give the fantasy any sentimental charm, and he's hell on the actors, including Mercedes Ruehl as Bridges' earthy lover and Amanda Plummer as Williams' gawky amorous ideal. They mug; Gilliam takes mug shots. The movie is a peculiarly irritating failure—a leaden piece of uplift.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

FRANKIE & JOHNNY—The movie version of Terrence McNally's 1987 play "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" is a sweet-tempered romantic comedy whose main characters are a New York coffee-shop waitress, Frankie (Michelle Pfeiffer), and a short-order cook, Johnny (Al Pacino). McNally, adapting his two-character play for the screen, has expanded and drastically rearranged his original story. He and the director, Garry Marshall, have attempted to place Frankie and Johnny in a variety of settings, to stretch the narrative out over a longer period, to surround the lovers with lots of other people—and to incorporate all this extra material without dissipating the emotional tensions of the main characters' relationship. Although the new characters and settings sometimes give the movie the feel of a sitcom, the filmmakers keep the basic principles of romantic comedy in view, and the stars' performances elevate the material. Pacino brings out the comedy and the ambiguity of a middle-aged man's sense of emotional rebirth: he's exuberant, touching, and a little scary. And Pfeiffer is extraordinary; her Frankie is a superbly detailed rendering of a woman with a fanatically conservative heart. The strength of the play was its simplicity and its directness; the movie preserves those qualities by telling the story in the ordinary, straightforward Hollywood manner. This is a vehicle for Pacino and Pfeiffer, and they're more glamorous than the characters they're playing, but, in a weird way, their star power is perfectly appropriate here: it's the meat-and-potatoes stuff of big-budget movie entertainment. Kate Nelligan and Nathan Lane are standouts in a large supporting cast, which also includes Hector Elizondo and Jane Morris.—T.R. (10/21/91) (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, U.A. East, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Loews Astor Plaza.)

Le Gai Savoir (1968)—"Weekend" (made earlier this same year) was the culmination of Jean-Luc Godard's great, rampaging, innovative career, and after it he seemed to be back at Square One, trying to found a new Maoist political cinema. "Le Gai Savoir" was the first of his monotonous, didactic experiments, and it's just about impossible to sit through. Juliet Berto (as the daughter of Lumumba) and Jean-Pierre Léaud (as Rousseau's great-great-grandson) begin on a course of study; there's not much to look at, and since the soundtrack is full of bleeps to cover the obscenities, there's nothing to do but read the subtitles as the two of them talk. In French.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Nov. 20.)

Homicide—With Joe Mantegna, directed by David Mamet. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Village East Cinemas, Sutton, Chelsea Cinemas, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

House Party 2—There's one heaven-sent dream sequence of the hero, Kid, rising up in a circle of cloud-borne, boogying college students clad in orange graduation robes. It's a gas just to see his wedge of hair literally brush the vapors. For the most part, though, this sequel is as scattered as the first film and a lot more familiar. Kid decides to forgo his rap ambitions as half of Kid 'N Play and enter college. But Play hands over Kid's enrollment money to a record-world scam artist; later, to make amends, Play comes up with the idea of raising money with a pajama party (or "pajama jam" or "jammy jam"). The cast includes some engaging low comedians, especially Martin Lawrence as a would-be d.j. off on his own frequency; at his best, he operates as a staticky Greek chorus. But the gags are usually lame or shaggy. And the inspirational quotes from Marcus Garvey and James Baldwin, as well as a subplot about political correctness, stick out from the story the way Kid's hair does from his pop-eyed face and gangly body. Christopher Reid is Kid and Christopher Martin is Play; co-starring Tisha Campbell, Queen Latifah, and Georg Stanford Brown; written by Rusty Cundieff and Daryl G. Nickens; produced and directed by Doug McHenry and George Jackson.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Life Is Sweet—In this wonderful new comedy, the English writer and director Mike Leigh ("High Hopes") takes us into the domestic life of a lower-middle-class family in Middlesex. The characters are, by conventional standards, ordinary, but they aren't dreary, and their actions aren't predictable; the movie doesn't treat anyone as a type. Wendy (Alison Steadman) is an attractive, ebullient middle-aged woman who's always on the move, always doing something. Her husband, Andy (Jim Broadbent), is an amiable dawdler, a guy who starts ambitious home-improvement projects and never quite gets around to finishing them. They're the parents of a ludicrously mismatched set of twins: Natalie (Claire Skinner), a quiet, serious, dignified girl; and Nicola (Jane Horrocks), who hates her life and responds with snarls and contemptuous epithets to even the most innocuous attempts at conversation. Leigh doesn't give us an obvious narrative hook—a clear sense of what the story is going to be about or what sort of dramatic revelations he might have in store for us. And, despite Nicola's bratty outbursts, the tone is light and casual. The movie even throws in some extended slapstick sequences featuring an oddball family friend played by Timothy Spall: we're never able to settle into a single mood. Leigh doesn't manipulate our responses; he roughs them up a little, though. By means of a dense texture of tiny behavioral details and disconcerting shifts of style, he attempts to reshuffle our emotions. He prepares us to accept the moments of piercing, almost miraculous clarity that arise, as if by accident, at the end of his best films. In this picture, he builds up to a conversation between Wendy and Nicola that is perhaps the most extraordinary scene in recent movies. Also with Stephen Rea.—T.R. (11/4/91) (Angelika Film Center.)

Little Man Tate—Fred Tate (Adam Hann-Byrd) is a seven-year-old intellectual prodigy who lives with his single, working-class mother, Dede (Jodie Foster). The screenplay, by Scott Frank, presents the young hero as one unhappy whiz kid: Fred's public-school education doesn't challenge him, and his classmates treat him like a freak. Nobody comes to his birthday party. The picture (which was directed by Foster) is frustrating, because it seems reluctant to explore with any rigor the special problems that a boy like Fred might have. The filmmakers keep falling back on pathos and on the easy irony that the main character is, despite his extraordinary gifts, an ordinary boy with the normal emotional needs of any seven-year-old. By the end of the movie, his precocious intelligence has lost its distinctive qualities, and he's no more than an exotic variant of a standard type: the lonely, misunderstood kid who yearns for love and acceptance. Our interest in Fred actually diminishes in the course of the picture; Frank and Foster introduce a unique hero and then spend two hours stripping him of his individuality. Also with Dianne Wiest, David Pierce, P. J. Ochlan, and Harry Connick, Jr.—T.R. (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews New York Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

My Own Private Idaho—The third feature by the independent filmmaker Gus Van Sant ("Mala Noche," "Drugstore Cowboy") is like an exploded version of the previous two, and it scatters meanings all over the landscape. It's a beautiful disaster, like a bomb test in the middle of nowhere. The movie is set primarily in Van Sant's familiar territory—the seedier parts of Portland, Oregon—and its main characters are a pair of young hustlers, Mike (River Phoenix) and Scott (Keanu Reeves), who sell their bodies on the street. Mike is a narcoleptic: every time he blacks out, he has lyrical dreams composed of imagery from his childhood. Scott, who is the son of Portland's mayor, is modelled on Shakespeare's Prince Hal; the Falstaff character here is a scruffy gay cokehead called Bob (William Richert), and his scenes with Scott are stylized variations of incidents from both parts of "Henry IV" (hence also variations on Orson Welles' "Chimes at Midnight"). Van Sant takes a lot of chances, and visually the movie is so imaginative, so fiercely alive, that it carries us along. But when the over-all design of the picture becomes clear, we feel cheated rather than enlightened. Scott turns into a villain; Bob is ennobled as a symbol of outlaw freedom; and Mike takes on the aura of a holy fool, the Prince Myshkin of the Portland meat market. Van Sant's vision is disappointingly trite and schematic. Phoenix, however, gives a superbly intelligent and intuitive performance. The original screenplay is by Van Sant. Eric Alan Edwards and John Campbell did the cinematography.—T.R. (10/7/91) (Plaza, and Waverly.)

Other People's Money—The film version of Jerry Sterner's 1989 play is an attempt to turn the corporate-takeover frenzy of the Reagan era into the material of farce. The main character is a greedy, unscrupulous Wall Street wizard known as Larry the Liquidator (Danny De Vito), who's trying to buy—and close down—a small, stable, profitable New England wire-and-cable company. This family business is run by a benign patriarch (Gregory Peck), who is meant to embody the old-fashioned values of American free enterprise: he hates debt, cares about his workers,

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"Secret Agent" (playing November 14, at Theatre 80 St. Marks) is the weirdest movie Alfred Hitchcock made: a First World War espionage thriller that lurches between suave levity and sobriety. It has a crazily discordant cast headed by John Gielgud as Ashenden, the writer-turned-spy created by Somerset Maugham. By 1936, Gielgud, the stage star destined to become one of the screen's most sly comedians, hadn't yet made peace with the camera. His face goes through a geological shift when he moves from drawing-room farce to high seriousness. He's joined by Madeleine Carroll (one of Hitchcock's first cool blondes) as Ashenden's assigned "wife," Peter Lorre as an overenthusiastic assassin nicknamed the General, Robert Young as an American who lusts for Carroll, and the bouncy young Lilli Palmer as the woman who leads the British spies to the right man. The film sports two exciting set pieces—a chase through a Swiss chocolate factory, and a nocturnal train run ending in a plane attack and a terrifying crash.

There's something burstingly modern about the way the movie reels and flies apart. Hitchcock and his scenarists (Charles Bennett, Alma Reville, Ian Hay, and Jesse Lasky, Jr.) scatter clues like gum wrappers as Ashenden and the General visit Switzerland to find an enemy agent whose skulduggery affects the war in Palestine. Then Hitchcock turns his blithe gamesmanship against itself. He builds a sequence around a wirehaired dachshund who turns out to be telepathic: the dog knows when our antiheroes kill his innocent master. Ashenden gets enmeshed in a jarring crisis of conscience, as well as a tortured romance with his manufactured missus. The whole film has an exploratory feel; the camerawork and editing set off daring changes in perspective. Hitchcock looks backward to John Buchan and ahead to John le Carré, while Lorre camps out in the lunatic realm of John Huston's "Beat the Devil." The most alert actor is Young, who turns a stroll with Carroll into a flirtatious gavotte. He wasn't drinking decaf fifty-five years ago.

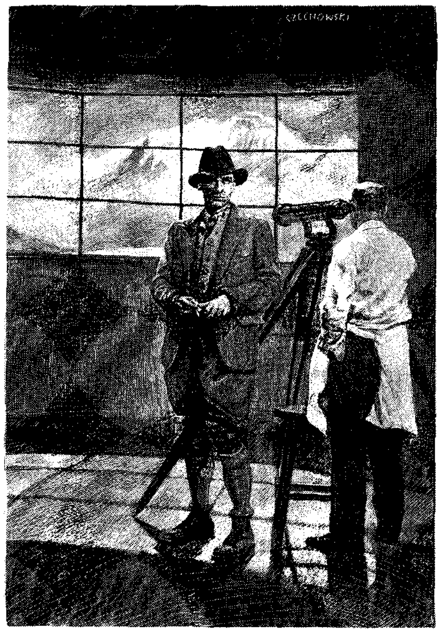
and wears cardigan sweaters around the office. Shuttling between the opposing camps is Kate Sullivan (Penelope Ann Miller), a young lawyer with a devious mind and good legs: she represents the wire-and-cable company, but she and Larry are manipulative soulmates, and in the course of negotiations their enthusiastic gamesmanship evolves into a weird kind of courtship. The director, Norman Jewison, and the screenwriter, Alvin Sargent, are old pros, and they set up the movie's intricate plot with admirable clarity. But they're conscientious to a fault. They lay out the moves and countermoves of the takeover battle so deliberately that even the Great Communicator himself might be able to follow the story. The movie feels like two hours of exposition; when it's over, we're still waiting for the fun to start. And the attempt to merge De Vito's trademark comic-vulgarian persona and the attributes of a romantic leading man doesn't come off at all. De Vito's performance is a Schwarzenegger-like exercise in image adjustment: it's not acting, it's spin control. Also with Piper Laurie and Dean Jones.—T.R. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Paris Is Burning—Jennie Livingston's documentary about gay black and Latino men who compete in drag balls is a beautiful piece of work—lively, intelligent, exploratory. The drag queens we see here seem to be holding up a mirror to the world of the empowered as they see it in movies, TV shows, and magazines. In the ballroom, some present themselves as elegant, glamorous women in designer outfits, and walk with the hip-swinging slouch of runway models, while others adopt more mundane personas: college students (of both sexes); military men; Wall Street businessmen; aristocrats at play, dressed for yachting or riding to hounds. The criteria by which all these turns are judged is verisimilitude—"realness." The material is almost too rich, too suggestive. Everything about the ball culture signifies so blatantly and so promiscuously that the movie induces a kind of semiotic daze. Livingston is smart enough not to reduce her subjects to the sum of their possible meanings, perhaps because she realizes that the way the drag performers manipulate image and fetishes and the iconography of popular culture is for many of them a sophisticated form of humor. The most self-aware of the gay men in this picture revel in the ironies of their social and sexual identities, and Livingston makes us appreciate the comic grace and the strange wisdom of that approach. Like all the best documentary filmmakers, she does her subjects the honor of allowing them to retain some of their mystery. Edited by Jonathan Oppenheim.—T.R. (3/25/91) (Quad Cinema.)

Rambling Rose—A nineteen-year-old live wire named Rose (Laura Dern), an unconventional housekeeper and nanny, brings sexual electricity to an eccentric middle-class household in sleepy Depression-era Georgia. She throws herself at Daddy (Robert Duvall) and introduces thirteen-year-old Brother (Lukas Haas) to the mysteries of the female orgasm. By the time she leaves, her good-hearted promiscuity inspires the freethinking Mother (Diane Ladd) to new heights of proto-feminist passion. Scripted by Calder Willingham from his 1972 novel, this piece of screwball Americana pokes along with an alternately prickly and tender charm. The director, Martha Coolidge, isn't an ace at pacing or shaping scenes, but she elicits superb performances from her male leads. Duvall jettisons his usual rural mannerisms, giving a subtle, fluid, full-bodied characterization of a starchy patriarch with off-the-wall eloquence. Haas is irresistibly sly and rapt as an adolescent whose lustful curiosity turns to love. Coolidge restrains Ladd—she's touchingly dissociated as a spacey woman with insight and a hearing problem. But Dern's self-conscious ardor idealizes Rose even more than the script does. And the movie hits a bad bump when it weds the celebration of a free spirit to anti-sexist melodrama. Still, at its best, it's ticklish and original—sweetly raunchy.—M.S. (59th Street East Cinema, Quad Cinema, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Ricochet—A black political figure on the rise is suddenly tagged in public as a sexual sleazebag. "The Clarence Thomas Story"? No, just the latest shock schlock from director Russell Mulcahy (the "Highlander" films), with Denzel Washington as a cop-turned-assistant-D.A. and John Lithgow as the vengeful, psychopathic hit man who'll stop at nothing to frame him. Extremism can be fun, but not when it's as calculated, sadistic, and nonsensical as it is here; the two stars bring slumming to new pits. Washington has the more amusing and unpredictable turn as a man willing to push the edge of the legal envelope. But the hero's innocence and eventual triumph are never in doubt: Justice Thomas, eat your heart out. Steven E. de Souza wrote the script, from a story by Fred Dekker and Menno Meyjes.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, and Criterion Center.)

Salome (1922)—One of the true curiosities of film history. Rudolph Valentino's wife, the designer Natacha Rambova (she designed her own name, also), loved Aubrey Beardsley's drawings. She arranged to make this film with Alla Nazimova in the lead and Charles Bryant directing, and she did the décor and costumes, based on Beardsley's. The bizarre results are undramatic and boring, and yet often so decorator-dream-born they're fascinating. Nazimova, one of the greatest actresses of her time, shows almost nothing of her talents here. She has a surprisingly boyish figure in the outré garments, and throughout much of the film her hair seems to be covered with ball fringe. The movie looks better in stills than when one actually sees it, but a folly like this should probably be experienced. Silent.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 17.)



John Gielgud in "Secret Agent"

The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe—Trudy, a crazy bag lady, has taken upon herself the task of showing visiting extraterrestrials the variety of life on earth. She has an umbrella hat that picks up signals from everywhere and turns her into a living TV set, with lots of channels and great reception. She's played by Lily Tomlin, and every person whose life flashes onto Trudy's psychic screen is played by Lily Tomlin, too. Tomlin gives us a clear, sharp picture every time: she's a high-definition actress. This astonishing one-woman show, presented on Broadway in 1985, was written for Tomlin by her longtime collabotator Jane Wagner. The belated film version, directed by John Bailey, adds some distracting visual effects, but it mostly does justice to the extraordinary talents of these women. Nothing interferes with the dazzling rhythm of Tomlin's performance, and the piece is constructed so that its themes build up an inexorable momentum. The characters who flash across the screen turn out, in the end, to be connected to each other in ways we couldn't have anticipated. And it's immensely gratifying to see all the different personalities gathered together in one woman. This is probably the only solo theatrical performance that truly deserves to be called democratic.—T.R. (10/7/91) (Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ 57th St. Playhouse; through Nov. 14.)

Sex, Drugs, Rock & Roll—A one-man show in which Eric Bogosian plays, in succession, ten characters, none of whom interact with or refer to any of the others; each inhabits his own eerily self-contained world. The surprising thing about this acting tour de force is that its radically disparate parts really add up to something: in rock-and-roll terms, it's a concept album, not just a collection of singles. This picture, directed (erratically) by John McNaughton, was filmed in concert-movie style, with multiple cameras and before a paying crowd, and Bogosian looks relaxed and confident. In the past, his performances often felt desperate, coercive; he seems more willing now to allow the audience some freedom in responding to his characters. There's a real progression in the course of the film, from characters who provoke immediate, visceral reactions to characters whose effect on us is more ambiguous.

Bogosian warms us up with surefire stuff to prepare us for the riskier, more demanding material in the final part of the show. His last three monologues are the funniest in the movie—probably the finest work he has ever done.—T.R. (9/23/91) (Angelika Film Center; through Nov. 14.)

Terminator 2: Judgment Day—The killer cyborg who was played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the original "Terminator" (1984) has returned—only this time he's the hero. The first film, which was written and directed by James Cameron, is one of the genre-movie classics of the eighties: a lean, witty science-fiction movie without great pretensions to significance. The sequel, also written (with William Wisher) and directed by Cameron, is far less satisfying. The picture is full of spectacular action sequences and dazzling special effects, but the narrative doesn't have the snap of the original's: it's lumbering and monotonous, and it carries a heavy-handed anti-nuke message. The old, Schwarzenegger-model Terminator (the T-800) has been superseded by a more advanced model, the T-1000 (Robert Patrick), who is sleeker and more versatile. T-800, who represented the ultimate in destructive technology in the first film, seems almost human here: compared to T-1000, he's a vulnerable guy (or guyoid). The whole movie is based on the insane conceit that Arnold Schwarzenegger is the *underdog*. That's a stretch. Also with Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong, and Joe Morton. Effects by Stan Winston and many, many others.—T.R. (7/29/91) (Embassy.)

Tootsie (1982)—Marvellous fun. Dustin Hoffman is both the hero and the target of this satirical farce about actors. He plays Michael Dorsey, a brilliant, "uncompromising" New York actor whom no one wants to hire because he makes things hell for everybody. When Michael's girlfriend (Teri Garr) goes up for an audition for a role in a soap and is rejected, he makes himself up as a woman, presents himself as "Dorothy Michaels," and lands the job. And Michael finds himself when he's Dorothy—not because he has any secret desire to be a woman but because when he's Dorothy he's acting. He's such a dedicated, fanatical actor that he comes fully alive only when he's playing a role—you can see it in his intense, glittering eyes. Michael is in the guise of Dorothy when he meets his dream girl—Jessica Lange, who's like a shock absorber to him; she says her lines in such a mild, natural way that it makes perfect sense for him to stop in his tracks and stare at her in wonder. With Bill Murray, Charles Durning, George Gaynes, Geena Davis, Doris Belack, Dabney Coleman, and, as Michael's agent, Sydney Pollack, who also directed. Pollack does some of his best work yet in the opening sequences—a crackling, rapid-fire presentation of the hopes versus the realities of out-of-work actors' lives. The script is credited to Larry Gelbart and Murray Schisgal, but Don McGuire wrote the first draft, and Elaine May and many others worked on it.—P.K. (92nd Street Y; Nov. 20.)

Year of the Gun—The subject of the not-so-innocent abroad receives a visually sharp, dramatically fuzzy treatment in the latest suspense film from John Frankenheimer ("The Manchurian Candidate"). Andrew McCarthy plays David, an American reporter and would-be fiction writer secretly writing a novel on the Red Brigades while working for an English-language newspaper in Rome. As David makes love to the wealthy, chic Italian Lia (Valeria Golino) and to the hellbent Yankee photojournalist Alison (Sharon Stone), every move he makes brings him closer to the left-wing kamikazes shooting up the Eternal City. The audience notices—and guesses why—before he does. At one point, David quips that Americans in Rome don't need politics, they just need American Express. Apart from being anti-terrorist, this movie has no clear perspective, either. Frankenheimer's re-creations of leftist riots and the Red Brigades' mayhem are persuasive and scary. Elsewhere, he tries on attitudes for size: a critique of romantic bourgeois intellectuals here, a slap at U.S. media hustlers there. The result is exciting yet empty: a political thriller, hold the politics. David Ambrose adapted Michael Mewshaw's novel; the moody, weather-streaked cinematography is by Blasco Giuarto.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 23rd St. West Triplex, and 62nd & Broadway.)

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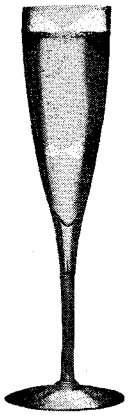
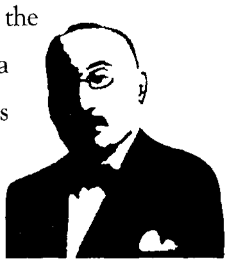


Few people know more about champagne than the famous wine connoisseur Robert Parker. He is, without question, one of the most respected authorities on the subject in the world today. A compliment from him is a compliment indeed. So, when he expressed his feelings about Champagne Salon Le Mesnil in print we were deeply flattered. ■ Of course, Salon's virtues have been extolled throughout this century. After all, Salon is the original blanc de blancs champagne. However, if the name has so far escaped your ears, or your lips for that matter, it's really hardly surprising. Just 6,000 to 12,000 cases are made in a vintage and only a small amount of these reach this country in any one year. And, as Salon is produced only in the very greatest vintage years, it has become a most sought-after marque. In fact, Salon has released only 20 vintages in the last 63 years, the fewest of any of the Grande Marques Champagne houses. ■ Why is such an esteemed champagne so hard to come by? Our story begins in France, in 1911, where a perfectionist, gourmet, and wealthy Champenois named Eugène-Aimé Salon set out to produce the world's finest champagne. The recipe for champagne had always been a blend of white and red grapes from different villages. That was a time-honored tradition that Aimé chose to ignore. He simply found the finest grapes money could buy and refused to blend them with any others. ■ He selected the Chardonnay grape from Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, a tiny Grand Cru village in the Côtes des Blancs. It produced a blanc de blancs champagne of extraordinary finesse and elegance. But as Aimé was seeking perfection, he decided to use only the cuvée, or first pressing. By aging it slowly deep in his chalk cellars, he gave his champagne a rare, refreshing crispness with the ability to grow more complex with age. A bottle of Salon ages remarkably well up to and beyond 20 years. Which is why a 50-year-old bottle of Salon sold at Christie's in 1978 for the highest price ever paid for a champagne at auction. And why, not too long ago, a glass of Salon cost $30 at the Waldorf-Astoria. ■ Aimé Salon's insistence that he would produce his champagne only in the greatest vintage years, or not at all was the ultimate quality control factor. Today, Salon is still produced as carefully and as lovingly as it was at the turn of the century under the same strict rules laid down by Aimé Salon. Back in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, the cellar master still opens every single bottle of Salon by hand to ensure the bouquet is correct before it leaves the cellar. ■ Which is why every glass offers the same brilliant pale-gold hue. A bouquet that is always delicate and toasty with a scent of green apples and citrus. A first sip that is crisp, tingling and creamy with layer upon layer of fruit and Salon's characteristic hint of hazelnut. And, finally, a haunting finish that lingers on your palate longer than you ever thought possible. ■ Of course, if you really want to know why Salon continues to impress Mr. Parker and his fellow connoisseurs, we suggest you simply uncork a bottle. If you are fortunate enough to find one.



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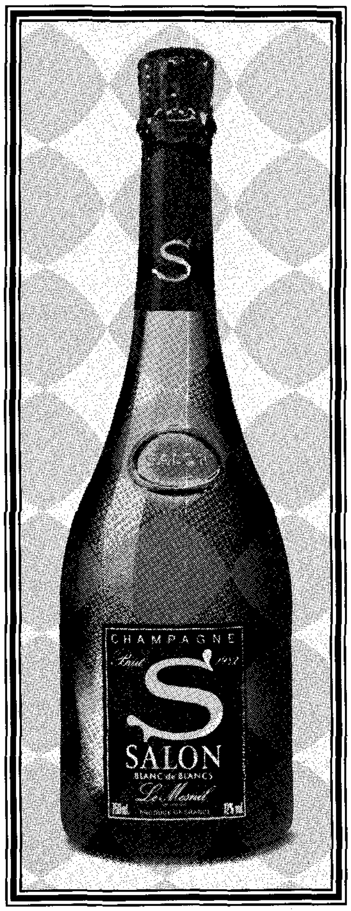

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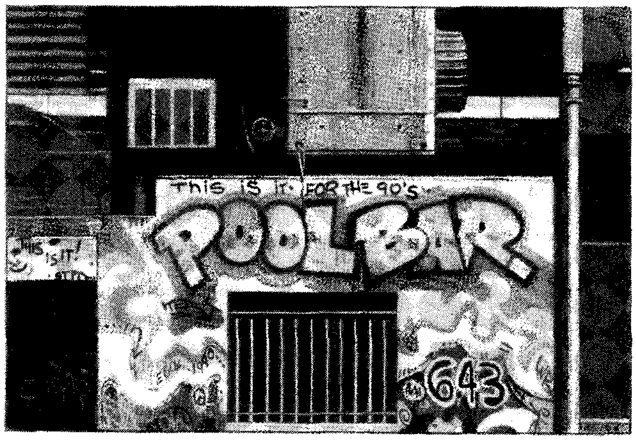
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

IN recent weeks, the Bush Administration has stunned the world by launching a pair of initiatives aimed at relaxing the nuclear hair trigger and breaking the Middle East stalemate. On September 27th, President Bush announced in a nationally televised speech that he was taking part of the American doomsday arsenal off twenty-four-hour-alert status: for the first time in thirty-four years, the B-1 and B-52 bombers of the Strategic Air Command would not be parked on runways around the clock, armed and ready to strike at the Soviet Union. He also said that the United States would eliminate most of its short-range nuclear weapons outright and cancel plans to build mobile MX and Midgetman long-range missiles. The President invited the Soviet Union to match these cutbacks and to join in negotiating an eventual elimination of the entire class of land-based multiple-warhead missiles.

The Administration's Middle East initiative was equally dramatic. President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker, with the coöperation of their Soviet counterparts, convened a conference in Madrid on October 30th that marked the first time Israel and all its Arab neighbors had engaged in face-to-face talks since the state of Israel was founded, in 1948. Advocates of an Arab-Israeli settlement had long postulated an international conference as the essential first step toward a lasting resolution of the crisis, but few had expected it to happen any time soon. For that reason alone, the gathering of Arab and Israeli representatives around a conference table in Madrid's Royal Palace qualifies as a historic achievement.



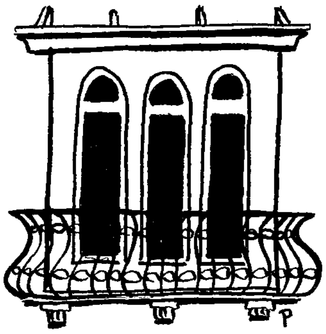
Anyone familiar with the histories of the arms race and the Arab-Israeli conflict, however, has reason to wonder whether Mr. Bush's initiatives will make a real difference: in both cases, countless past opportunities for choosing peace over escalation have been not merely lost but actively rejected; and the manipulation of information by propagandists on all sides has often made it difficult to grasp the relevant facts of the situations. Take, for instance, President Bush's cancellation of the nuclear-alert status. Richard Cheney, the Secretary of Defense, called this "the single biggest change" in American nuclear-weapons deployment in the last four decades. And the amount of hardware covered by Mr. Bush's order certainly sounded impressive: it removed some four hundred and fifty long-range missiles and forty strategic bombers from war footing. It turns out, though, that these forces amounted to only five per cent of the warheads in the American strategic arsenal, and only eight per cent of the warheads routinely kept on alert status.

What is more meaningful is Bush's embrace of nuclear unilateralism. President Mikhail Gorbachev has practiced such unilateralism in the Soviet Union for years, most significantly when he banned nuclear-weapons tests for a total of eighteen months during the mid-nineteen-eighties. But Bush, like Ronald Reagan before him, always declined to reciprocate with American reductions or a test ban. As a result, arms control remained subject to a secretive and cumbersome negotiating process that was dominated by the military establishments of both countries and tended to maintain nuclear arsenals rather than shrink them. Unilateralism, however, offers the chance of immediate results, and that is probably what accounts for the President's newfound approval of it. With the Soviet Union falling apart, American officials feared that the Kremlin might lose control over parts of the Soviet arsenal, especially short-range weapons. Under the circumstances, there was no time for protracted negotiations with Moscow. The quickest way to address the problem was for Bush simply to announce that the United States was eliminating most of its own short-range weapons, and hope that the Soviet leadership would follow suit. This Gorbachev readily did; apparently, he and his colleagues were equally worried by the so-called loose-nukes problem. Indeed, what Gorbachev did went further than Bush's proposal in many respects: he proposed eliminating short-range weapons from all aircraft; he announced a one-year test ban; and he suggested that every nuclear power formally pledge never to be the first country to use nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, the Pentagon rejected any reciprocal action. Notwithstanding its dovish rhetoric, the Bush Administration evidently still believes that it must be able to threaten other nations with nuclear attack, and it remains wholeheartedly committed to a continuing modernization of the American arsenal. In his September speech Bush had singled out the discredited B-2 bomber and the Star Wars space-weapons system as particularly worthy of support and had made it clear that he would strenuously resist significant cuts in the overall military budget, and he has not altered that position. This stubbornness is too important to dismiss as a sop to hard-liners; it indicates, instead, that Bush remains, at best, ambivalent about his own first steps toward nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, for a man famous for his caution, those steps represent a remarkable departure, and they may eventually lead to further steps.

It is harder to be optimistic about the Arab-Israeli negotiations; in Madrid, it often seemed that the animosities dividing the participants overshadowed all else. In his opening statement to the conference President Bush had felt obliged to point out that compromise is painful but necessary. The subsequent proceedings suggested that the delegates grasped the first half of his message but not the second. With the possible exception of the Palestinians, none of the leaders, Arab or Israeli, seemed to regard the renunciation of violence as a matter of self-interest.

Bush Administration officials argue that changes in outlook will come in time—that the talks themselves will alter the participants' views of what is acceptable and achievable. Whatever happens, though, the role of outside countries will remain critical, and not only in maintaining a constant worldwide attention that compels the Arabs and the Israelis to keep talking for fear that one side or the other will be branded the spoiler. The violence that has afflicted the Middle East for so many years may spring from age-old feuds and passions, but it has been fuelled by enormous quantities of arms supplied by governments that apparently valued profits and influence more highly than peace and stability. The United States, the Soviet Union, France, Germany, Great Britain—virtually all the great powers have had a hand in this arms trade. They could now make a major contribution to peace in the Middle East just by ceasing to provide the instruments of war. It will not be easy for Arabs and Israelis to transcend their belligerent past; indeed, prior to Madrid many would have said that it was impossible. But then it was not so long ago that people said the same thing about any move to reduce the nuclear-arms race.



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Music and Art

"THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC" is a W.P.A. fresco that was painted on three walls of the music room—now the dance room—of George Washington High School in 1937 and 1938. George Washington, up in Washington Heights, is Manhattan's largest public high school in terms of enrollment—it currently accommodates nearly four thousand students—and the fresco is in a room that is used eleven hours a day for eleven and a half months of the year. Yet in the decades since it was completed no one has ever tried to deface it or to mark it in any manner. In fact, the fresco, which depicts the history of world music from talking drums to symphonies, has been loved by so many people for so long that in a time of stringent cutbacks it has just been painstakingly restored. Working on it last summer, in temperatures nearing a hundred degrees, but without air-conditioning and often wearing filter masks, a youthful team called the New York Conservation Associates removed half a century's worth of dirt and grime. As part of the conservation process, the fresco was also accorded a rare honor: the Board of Education permitted a regulation clock and loudspeaker to be removed from the moonlit Oriental section. At the moment, the dance room is the only classroom in the high school—perhaps in any New York public high school—where time is not something to be watched but, rather, something to be felt.

The other day, a group of dignitaries long out of high school—among them a George Washington alumna, Mrs. David Dinkins—gathered in the dance room for the fresco's rededication. The restoration had come about under the Adopt-A-Mural Program, which is co-sponsored by the Art Commission of the City of New York and the Municipal Art Society. One of the project's two adopters—the singer Madonna, who has provided an endowment for maintenance of the fresco—couldn't be present at the ceremony. But the other adopter—Agnes Gund, the new president of the Museum of Modern Art—was there, smiling unreservedly and gesturing toward what she called "a beautiful merging and floating work of art." Mrs. Gund, who financed the restoration itself, is a tall, radiant, stylish New Yorker and a vigorous speaker, and she received warm applause. It was surpassed, though, by the reception accorded a petite, bright-eyed, white-haired woman who wore a simple black dress, suède Adidas, and, tied in a bow around her flip hairdo, a piece of blue yarn the color of her eyes. This was the fresco's artist, Lucienne Bloch.

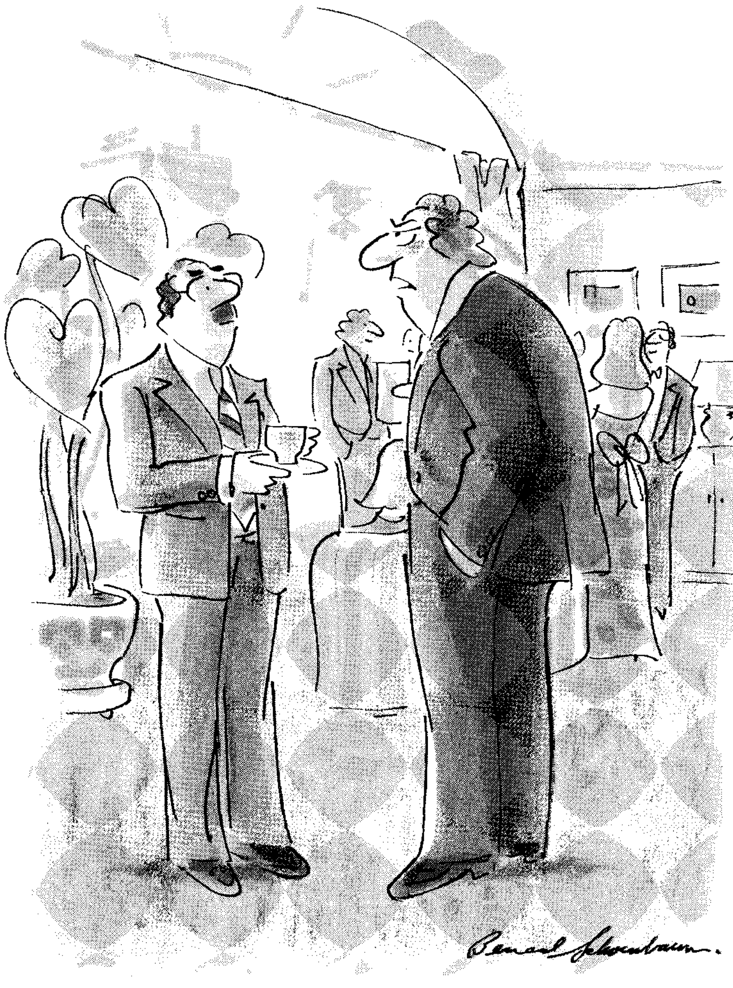
Ms. Bloch stood with her back to a wall of windows and then swept her gaze from one end of the fresco to the other and said, "When I came into the room for the first time, as a young woman, and saw the white, negative space of the plain walls, I thought about how I was going to make something about music, and I asked myself, 'What in music is visual?' In one place I decided to show people dancing in Van Cortlandt Park, so I made a sketch of that idea. Then I thought I'd show a huge orchestra. But after a while I said, 'Uh-uh. Not it.' I went to the library, and while there I suddenly realized that music is composed of sound waves. So I made an oscillating pattern to run through the whole fresco and tie it together. I also used wavelike ideas at various points, like short lines that not only stand for the heads of cattails but ascend like a scale to give the idea of high notes. *That's* visual."

Ms. Bloch chuckled, and went on, "I decided to put in instruments representing music from all over the world. I'd always been exposed to music of every sort at home. My father, Ernest Bloch, was a composer, and he used to give us children records so that we could learn about music from Arab countries, from Polynesia—everywhere. My sister became fascinated by medieval European music, and, because of her interest, she learned to play the lute. So I painted her over there in the medieval section with her instrument. After that comes a very little bit of the classical period—part of a building with columns. I didn't have much room. Then comes the modern orchestra, with the prima-donna conductor, all the lights trained on his beautiful hair. That's Stokowski. Next to this you see the composer writing music in the dark. That's my father. Then come a group of black hands clapping, just the way you see them back there in the African section, but with white gloves on—jazz. It ends up with barbed wire. Remember, this was 1938, and Hitler was in power. I saw war coming and showed it. But I had a little bit of optimism, and on top of a wire I put one bird."

Over lunch afterward, Ms. Bloch explained how Madonna had come into the picture. The singer called her about a year ago and said she was interested in making a movie starring herself as the painter Frida Kahlo, whom Ms. Bloch had known well, since Kahlo was the companion of the muralist Diego Rivera, Ms. Bloch's mentor. "I invited Madonna out to visit," Ms. Bloch said. "My husband, Steve Dimitroff, and I live in a tiny California town named Gualala. Madonna arrived in a big silver limo. She was dressed in black, no lipstick, and had black hair, like Frida. She came into the house and stood in front of me. She was just my height. I said to her, 'Your nose and your chin are O.K., but to play Frida you'll have to paint your eyebrows.' Well, she turned out to be extremely well read and to have already learned a lot about Frida. I liked Madonna—she's much more serious than I'd been led to expect. Anyway, I served her pizza, and while I was warming it up I gave her some of Frida's letters to read. At one point, she yelled in from the living room, 'What's this Spanish word *pedo*?' So I stuck my head out from my cooking and yelled back 'Fart!' See, she learned even sitting there. She laughed and laughed, and I could tell by the laugh that she had something of Frida's mischievous character. Later, she sent me a photo of herself and signed it '*Merde*,' which for theatre people means 'Good luck.' So I sent her back a photograph of myself that Steve had taken four years before I painted 'The Evolution of Music.' It shows me on a scaffold at Rockefeller Center, where I was assisting Rivera with those wonderful murals that proved so controversial that they were covered over and, in the process, inadvertently destroyed. Whitewash had been applied to the window near where I was standing. I had scraped out my own message on that window, and it was '*Merde*.'"

Umbrella

WHO goes to a vegetarian conference and exposition? Looking in on one such event recently, we beheld lacto-ovo-vegetarians (eggs and dairy products but no flesh), lacto-vegetarians (milk and cheese but no eggs or flesh), vegans (no animal products whatsoever), and perhaps even a few fruitarians (nothing cooked), although we can't say for sure, because we didn't actually speak to any. Debra Wasserman, who did as much as anybody to bring the conference about, suggested to us that fruitarianism may be more a point of discussion than a practice. "I've met people who say they are fruitarians, but they never really are when you get to know them," she said. But if no true fruitarians were in attendance it wasn't because they had been made to feel unwelcome; the Vegetarian Resource Group, which sponsored the conference—and which Ms. Wasserman helped found—isn't that sort of group. "In the past, most of the vegetarian groups were small—they only talked to themselves," she said. "They were strange hippie types. But we



"I may not know much about the Constitution, but I certainly know what I like."

have a lot of members in the farm country in the Midwest, where the nearest health-food store is a four- or five-hour drive away. We believe in reaching out to everyone."

Imagine, then, a large and inviting umbrella, or, better yet, the spacious interior of the Unitarian Universalist Church, at the corner of Seventy-sixth Street and Central Park West, where the conference took place. Imagine, in one room of the church, someone like Patricia Baird, a dietitian and budding author of cookbooks, who long ago gave up the idea of embracing vegetarianism on a personal basis, because, she explained, "I find that I need some meat every once in a while," and who assured us that her volume "Quick Harvest: A Vegetarian's Guide to Microwave Cooking" was written not just for vegetarians but for all the eighty-odd million Americans who own microwaves, inasmuch as many of the recipes "go real well with meat and fish and chicken." And imagine, in another, far-off room, someone like Cat Kubic, a committed vegan and animal-rights activist, who helps organize anti-fur fashion shows in which the models wear fur coats that have been, in her words, "redesigned with the bloody side out," and who condemns milk and meat equally as "slaughterhouse slop," since, she told us, the removal of calves from their mothers facilitates both the veal and the milk industries. And then imagine Ms. Baird and Ms. Kubic, by an unfortunate accident of timing, in the same room at once.

The room was the Authors' Room, where Ms. Baird had set up shop alongside Bobbie Hinman, a co-author of the Lean and Luscious series, and Rynn Berry, the author of "Famous Vegetarians and Their Favorite Recipes." Ms. Kubic drifted in just as Ms. Baird was explaining that strict vegetarianism makes her uneasy, since she has observed a high incidence of anemia among people who avoid dairy products.

"Is this vegan?" Ms. Kubic inquired, examining the cover of Ms. Baird's book.

Ms. Baird replied, with a smile, that the book included a fair number of vegan recipes.

"It's not a vegan cookbook, in other words," Ms. Kubic said coldly.

Ms. Baird confessed that it was not.

"Are you a vegetarian?" Ms. Kubic asked.

Ms. Baird, looking uncomfortable, answered in the negative.

"What are you doing here, then?" demanded Ms. Kubic.

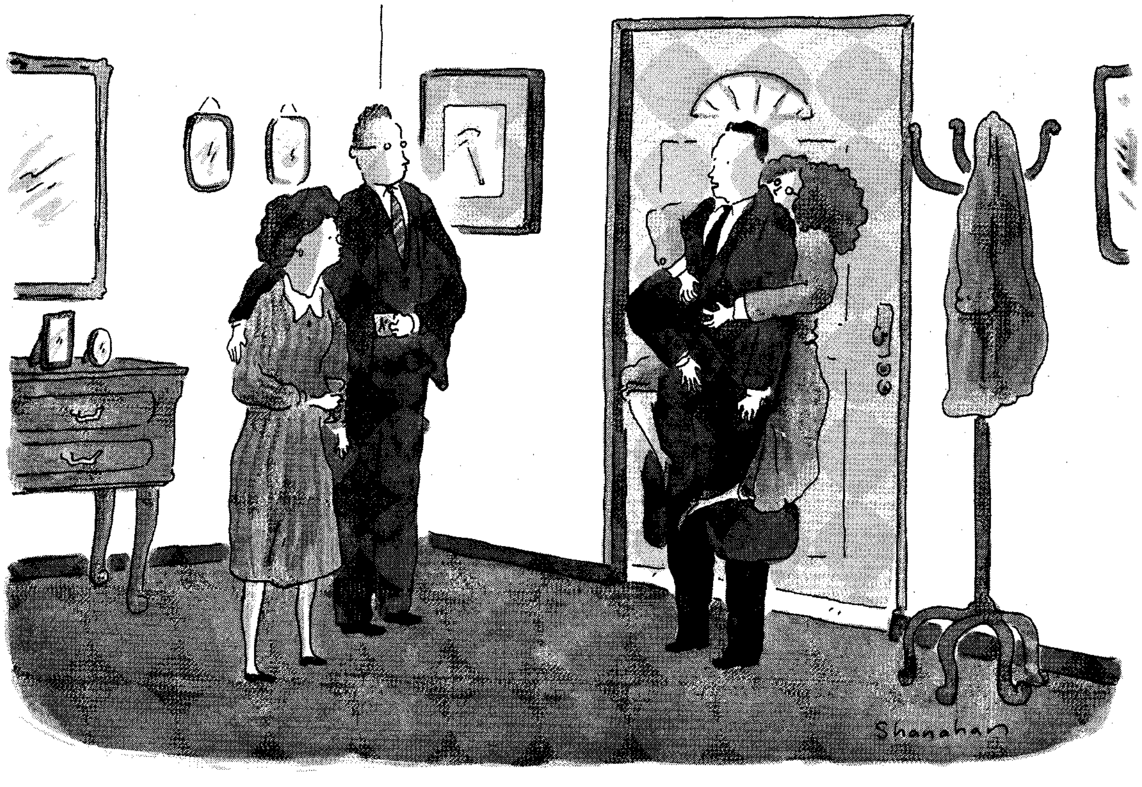
"I didn't think that the conference was closed to anyone," Ms. Baird said, and we thought we could see her cast a wistful glance at a number of potential book buyers who had edged away from her table.

In a hallway a few minutes later, Ms. Kubic was in conversation with Ms. Wasserman, giving her an account of Ms. Baird's comments and views, and vigorously suggesting that they were comments and views inappropriate to a vegetarian function. "Here's someone who claims to be a dietitian telling people that it's O.K. to drink another species' milk!" Ms. Kubic declared.

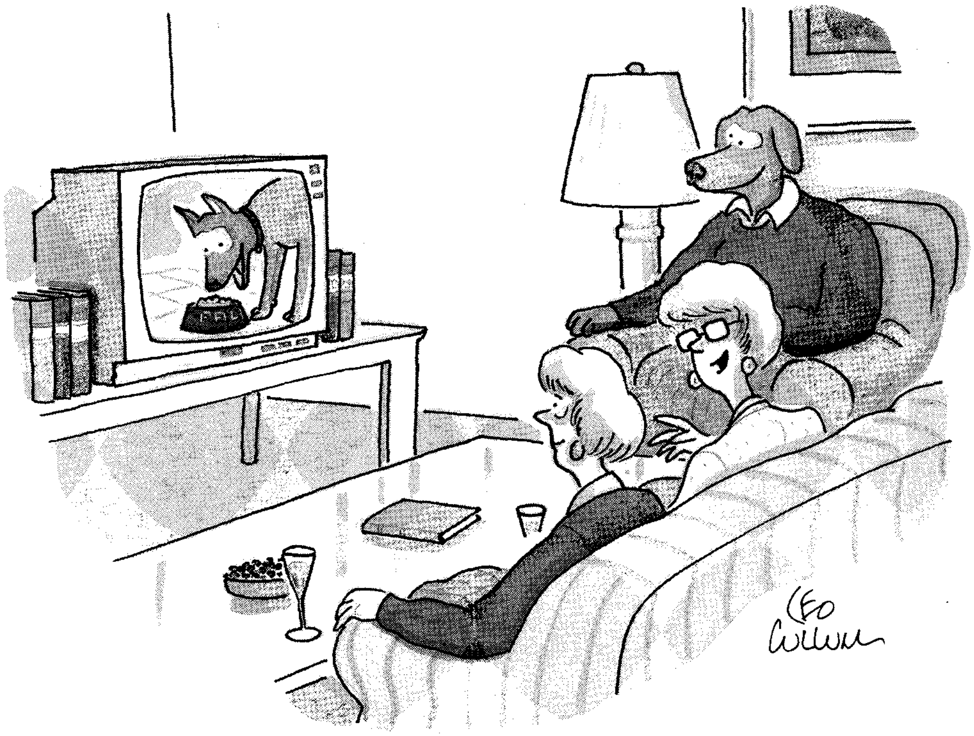
After she had moved on, Ms. Wasserman assured us that the conference as a whole was anything but acrimonious, and this was certainly true of the Exposition Room, where we listened to Carole Bollini singing excerpts from her "Healthy Diet Rap" for schoolchildren, and where we learned more than we ever expected to learn about Two-Fu, a vegetarian singles newsletter based in Westwood, New Jersey, and about its founder, Dr. David Rosenstein, who describes himself (in a prototype for the personal ads that run in the newsletter) as a "gentle, honest, sincere renaissance man."

Upstairs, the keynote address was under way. Marion Nestle, who chairs the Department of Nutrition, Food, and Hotel Management at New York University, was giving an evenhanded account of the history of the five food groups, which had been at one time the four, at another time the seven, and at still another time the eleven food groups, depending on the mood of the Department of Agriculture and, according to Dr. Nestle, the mood of the National Dairy Council, the National Cattlemen's Association, and the American Meat Institute.

Meanwhile, in the Dietitians' Room, a man named Brad was



"And this is Ivy."



"*Bill did the voice-over for this commercial.*"

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worried that his memory had deteriorated since his decision to give up meat. Mary Clifford, the dietitian on duty, told him that diet was probably not a factor. "I don't think Gandhi, with all his fasting, ever lost any brainpower," she pointed out.

"But didn't he eat dairy products?" Brad asked.

"Not while he was fasting," Ms. Clifford said.

Next door, in the Workshop Room, Steve Meyerowitz, who calls himself the Sproutman, and who markets, by mail order, a complete line of sprouting seeds and accessories—including a special "flaxseed" bag with a "huckaback weave," designed for "perfect aeration and drainage"—was addressing another form of anxiety: a feeling, on the part of many in his audience, that sprouting might be one more in-home activity than they had the time or money for. "How often have you gone to the health-food store and seen a head of organic romaine lettuce for two-forty-nine, and it's wilted!" Mr. Meyerowitz said. "It's wilted because it's been on that shelf for two or three days. I call that the freshness factor. This food"—he held up a basket of lush green sprouted buckwheat lettuce—"is alive. It's alive up until the minute you eat it. Sprouting may look complicated, but once you get over the learning curve it's strictly routine. It's like brushing your teeth, only it doesn't take as much time."

Enlightenment

JANET wanted to talk about Giovanni, an Italian psychologist she met in Los Angeles. "He has a Ph.D., and I didn't graduate from anywhere," she said. "The first thing he asked me was 'Do you trust people?' I said, 'I trust everyone.' He said, 'To trust everyone is to trust no one.' I said, 'Is that a literal translation of an old Italian proverb?' I won that round, don't you think? I don't know if you're supposed to win a round when you're talking to a psychologist. Here's a very important observation: he's very perceptive, even when he's wrong."

We made a note of it.

"Well, anyway," Janet said, "I went out to L.A. again on Wednesday to see him and to bring two kittens back to New York that my daughter found. The time before this, I got on a plane for San Francisco which stopped in San Jose, and you waited there an hour and then you got on another plane. My friends in Menlo Park said they'd prefer to pick me up in San Jose. I had a huge argument with the lady at the counter in Los Angeles when I tried to turn in the San Francisco piece of my ticket as a favor to the airline. 'Now the ticket's void,' she told me. I said, 'Never mind, I'll go to San Francisco.' 'Too late. You told me already,' she said. Then she made a long-distance call and wrote all over my ticket 'Must show I.D.' When I finally got on the plane, they announced, 'We have overbooked. Anybody who will take a later plane we will give a free three-hundred-dollar trip to anywhere. Will four people get off?' I almost didn't make it, so many people jumped off. I was the fourth.

"Back in New York, I had two expensive tickets to the opening night of the Met. I went with a friend of mine, a guy who said that he'd pay for his own ticket if I went with him but he'd pay for both seats if he could take somebody younger. That would have left me way up in the balcony. I went backstage afterward and told Pavarotti the whole story. He kissed me. I always say, '*Mi piacciono tutti gli italiani.*' "

It sounded familiar.

"I used to ask all cabdrivers, 'How old do you think I am?' But they began guessing my right age. One time, I said, 'How old do you think I am? I'm very old,' and the guy said, 'Eighty? Eighty-four?' So now I don't ask. I just tell them I'm old. My cabdriver today said, 'You're not old, you're mature.' I said, 'Wrong.' He was an Italian cabdriver. He helped me put my necklace on. You have to wind it around. I can't reach around my neck twice.

"At the moment, I'm a completely changed human being. I look the same, but my thinking is different. If I can find another Italian psychologist in New York, I'll continue my enlightenment. I realize now that the things I did wrong as a mother are not the things I thought I did wrong. I don't feel guilty anymore; I feel sorry. The essence of my enlightenment is to leave my kids alone. I just had the most unnerving conversation with a woman my age. I said, 'I can't remember if it's Monday or Tuesday,' and she said, 'It's Wednesday, dear.' I just want to know if anybody intelligent believes in the hereafter. Do you think that Mario Cuomo believes in the hereafter?"

We said we weren't sure.

LA NOUVELLE JOIE DE PEINDRE

“HI, and welcome to ‘The New Joy of Painting.’ Today on the show we have a happy treat: the very talented Neo-Impressionist Georges Seurat has joined us. What will you be painting for us today, Georges?”

“*C’est un moment tout à fait singulier, un instant qui ne pourra jamais se reproduire.*”

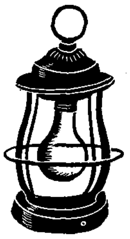
“Good enough. Well, as English is not Mr. Seurat’s first language, I will narrate the process, so you at home can follow along. I’ve already double-primed the canvas for him, and we’re going to have a super time.

“When Georges told me he was gonna paint the bourgeois class in their leisure time, I went out and bought a number of my favorite colors. And I’ll mention a couple of the popular ones right here at the start: cadmium yellow, or, as Georges here would say, *jaune de cadmium*, and cobalt blue, or *bleu de cobalt*. . . .Georges has borrowed a few of the drawings from his exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, he tells me, and—”

“*Trente.*”

“Thirty? Oh, that’s what that big pile of stuff is, over in the corner. We’re used to makin’ it up as we go along, but this is Georges’s world and he can create it any way he likes. But we only have twenty-six minutes, and it’s a big ol’ canvas, so let’s get going.

“Georges is starting out with some sky. That’s right—he’s just going to paint a little cobalt blue onto that canvas. Sure, something just about just like so. We all know how smooth a sky oughtta be, and he’s probably gonna wanna spread that blue all across— No, he’s puttin’ some dots up there, it looks like. Yep, just usin’ dots. Poke, poke. It’s fun to make little noises when you paint—right, Georges? O.K., you can be silent.



“Looks like Georges is about to start using another color. Maybe a little of our old pal burnt sienna could live here in this sky. . . . Or Georges will just dab a little . . . cantaloupe orange on that sky? Hmm.”

“*C’est le complément du bleu, et l’orange*—”

“I see. Sure, Georges will just complement that friendly cobalt blue. And look—I guess a little gray lives up in that sky. There, just the least little touch. Hey, whaddya know—our blue is just a bit more brilliant now, isn’t it?. . .And now our dusky little gray is tinted with the complementary of that blue. This is sorta fun—and confusing! And here comes some yellow ochre dancing around the edges, and now Georges’ll just put on some Mars black. Maybe he’ll just take out that palette knife and start to spread . . . No, I guess not—he’s just gonna keep on dottin’, like so. Pat, pat. Mmm, that’s an interesting effect. If you look long enough, you can start to feel a little dizzy.

“Now maybe we should start on our figures. . . .Nope, Georges still dabs some more cobalt blue on the sky—sure, why not? And there, he has a little titanium white, and he dots it against the canvas. Uh-oh, that could make his sky a little grumpy. I’ll bet Georges could spend all day on that sky, but we have to move on. And we should probably end our sky before it gets too sad.

“O.K., just let your imagination take you anywhere, and who cares where you wind up? I know Georges’s imagination is taking him lots of places—in the sky, anyway. Isn’t it, Georges? More dots—this time, he’s got little ones livin’ inside bigger ones. But now we *have* to move on to our bourgeois. You at home might want to go ahead and mix up some different colors and start in on those figures. They can be wherever you want, so become friends with them. Why not?

“Whoops, Georges got some paint on the bottom of the frame. Don’t worry—a little turpentine will . . . No, looks like Georges is just gonna paint the frame. That’s O.K. Sure, in our world there are no boo-boos, just happy accidents. Different directions can mean different emotions. It seems like Georges’s day is getting a little sadder, maybe even a little chilly. Brrr.

“I guess Georges still has a lot of sky to go. Let’s take a look at the *many* sketches he brought along—see what figures he’s gonna use. So let’s see . . . monkey, monkey, boatman, tree, another boatman, woman with umbrella, monkey, Seine, monkey. Maybe *you* could make some animals—I just love animals, don’t you, Georges? Let’s give that monkey a try, while Georges keeps playin’ with his beautiful, beautiful sky—just dottin’ away. Boop, boop.

“Hmm. Georges’s monkey looks a little stiff. You at home might want to make your painting cheerier. Shoot, maybe *your* monkey’s doin’ a funny jig. Think about monkeys you may have seen in books. Maybe someone you know looks a bit monkeyish—sure, we evolved from ’em. Yeah, and these sketches of the bourgeois Parisians look a little . . . I don’t know—*formal*, or something. It might be fun to make that ol’ Seine a little wavier, foamier. And maybe some bourgeois are taking a dip in that water. Sure, it *is* their leisure time. There—make your tree lines happier. Those bathers oughtta be laughing from all that leisure, and maybe a friendly French fish is casually jumping out of that river. Whoo! If you’re keeping up with my suggestions, I think by now you oughtta have a finished painting.

“Well, we’re still waitin’ for ol’ Georges. Maybe we could— Hey, I just thought of something. I like to watch a lot of TV, and I’ve noticed this neat little thing. Just look real close at your TV screen. Get right up next to it. There. What’s my face look like? And Georges’s? Just a bunch of dots. Now stand back. Those little guys just blend right in, don’t they? That’s how your TV works. Am I on the right track, Georges?”

“*Oui.*”

“Well, Georges is still complementing that blue, pokin’ away at that little part of that dusty ol’ late-day sky. Whoops, we only have about a minute left. How much more time do you need, Georges?”

“*Deux mois, deux ans, dix ans. Je ne sais pas.*”

“In Georges’s world, it might take a little longer to get things done. We’ll just move the canvas back here, and he can try to finish up during the cooking show that comes on next. They’re gonna make a scrumptious veal piccata that takes six and a half minutes.

“Now Georges is adding a little more titanium white to his sky. He’s just weakening that cobalt blue, makin’ that sky even sadder, even cooler. Maybe Georges just got up on the wrong side of the *lit* this morning. Maybe your own personal Paris at home is a little different, a little sunnier. Maybe it’s not so late in the afternoon. Maybe Georges doesn’t watch enough TV.”

—NOAH BAUMBACH

THE ELEPHANT VANISHES

WHEN the elephant disappeared from our town's elephant house, I read about it in the newspaper. My alarm clock woke me that day, as always, at six-thirteen. I went to the kitchen, made coffee and toast, turned on the radio, spread the paper out on the kitchen table, and proceeded to munch and read. I'm one of those people who read the paper from beginning to end, in order, so it took me a while to get to the article about the vanishing elephant. The front page was filled with stories on S.D.I. and the trade friction with America, after which I plowed through the national news, international politics, economics, letters to the editor, book reviews, real-estate ads, sports reports, and finally the regional news.

The elephant article was the lead story in the regional section. The unusually large headline caught my eye: "ELEPHANT MISSING IN TOKYO SUBURB," and, beneath that, in type one size smaller, "Citizens' Fears Mount. Some Call for Probe." There was a photo of policemen inspecting the empty elephant house. Without the elephant, something about the place seemed wrong. It looked bigger than it needed to be, blank and empty like some huge, dehydrated beast from which the innards had been plucked.

Brushing away my toast crumbs, I studied every line of the article. The elephant's absence had first been noticed at two o'clock on the afternoon of May 18th—the day before—when men from the school-lunch company delivered their usual truckload of food (the elephant mostly ate leftovers from the lunches of children in the local elementary school). On the ground, still locked, lay the steel shackle that had been fastened to the elephant's hind leg, as though the elephant had slipped out of it. Nor was the elephant the only one missing. Also gone was its keeper, the man who had been in charge of the elephant's care and feeding from the start.

According to the article, the elephant and keeper had last been seen sometime after five o'clock the previous day (May 17th) by a few pupils from the elementary school, who were visiting the elephant house, making crayon sketches. These pupils must have been the last to see the elephant, said the paper, since the keeper always closed the gate to the elephant enclosure when the six-o'clock siren blew.

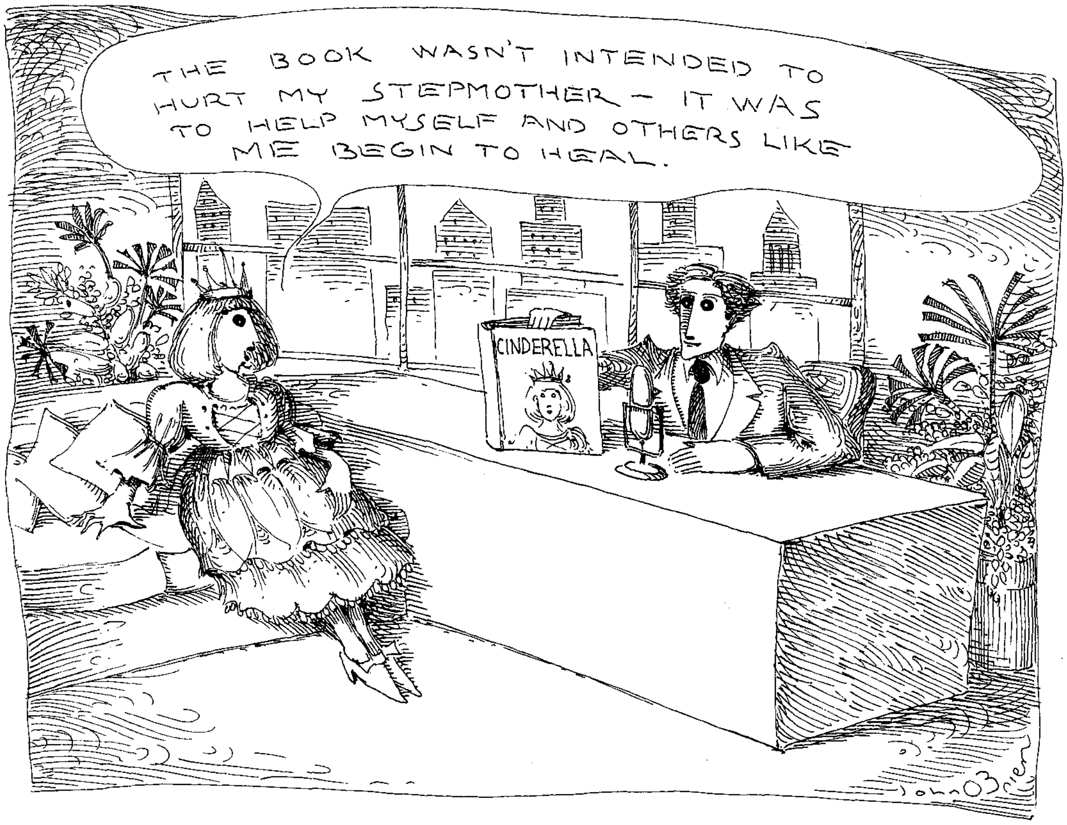
There had been nothing unusual about either the elephant or its keeper at the time, according to the unanimous testimony of the pupils. The elephant had been standing where it always stood, in the middle of the enclosure, occasionally wagging its trunk from side to side or squinting its wrinkly eyes. It was such an awfully old elephant that its every move seemed a tremendous effort—so much so that people seeing it for the first time feared it might collapse at any moment and draw its final breath.

The elephant's age had led to its adoption by our town a year earlier. When financial problems caused the little private zoo on the edge of town to close its doors, a wildlife dealer found places for the other animals in zoos throughout the country. But all the zoos had plenty of elephants, apparently, and not one of them was willing to take in a feeble old thing that looked as if it might die of a heart attack at any moment. And so, after its companions were gone, the elephant stayed alone in the decaying zoo for nearly four months with nothing to do—not that it had had anything to do before.

This caused a lot of difficulty, both for the zoo and for the town. The zoo had sold its land to a developer, who was planning to put up a high-rise condo building, and the town had already issued him a permit. The longer the elephant problem remained unresolved, the more interest the developer had to pay for nothing. Still, simply killing the thing would have been out of the question. If it had been a spider monkey or a bat, they might have been able to get away with it, but the killing of an elephant would have been too hard to cover up, and if it ever came out afterward the repercussions would have been tremendous. And so the various parties had met to deliberate on the matter, and they formulated an agreement on the disposition of the old elephant:

(1) The town would take ownership of the elephant at no cost.

(2) The developer would, without


THE BOOK WASN'T INTENDED TO HURT MY STEPMOTHER — IT WAS TO HELP MYSELF AND OTHERS LIKE ME BEGIN TO HEAL.
CINDERELLA
John O'Brien

compensation, provide land for housing the elephant.

(3) The zoo's former owners would be responsible for paying the keeper's wages.

I had had my own private interest in the elephant problem from the very outset, and I kept a scrapbook with every clipping I could find on it. I had even gone to hear the town council's debates on the matter, which is why I am able to give such a full and accurate account of the course of events. And while my account may prove somewhat lengthy, I have chosen to set it down here in case the handling of the elephant problem should bear directly upon the elephant's disappearance.

When the mayor finished negotiating the agreement—with its provision that the town would take charge of the elephant—a movement opposing the measure boiled up from within the ranks of the opposition party (whose very existence I had never imagined until then). "Why must the town take ownership of the elephant?" they demanded of the mayor, and they raised the following points (sorry for all these lists, but I use them to make things easier to understand):

(1) The elephant problem was a question for private enterprise—the zoo and the developer; there was no reason for the town to become involved.

(2) Care and feeding costs would be too high.

(3) What did the mayor intend to do about the security problem?

(4) What merit would there be in the town's having its own elephant?

"The town has any number of responsibilities it should be taking care of before it gets into the business of keeping an elephant—sewer repair, the purchase of a new fire engine, etc.," the opposition group declared, and while they did not say it in so many words, they hinted at the possibility of some secret deal between the mayor and the developer.

In response, the mayor had this to say:

(1) If the town permitted the construction of high-rise condos, its tax revenues would increase so dramatically that the cost of keeping an elephant would be insignificant by comparison; thus it made sense for the town to take on the care of this elephant.

(2) The elephant was so old that it neither ate very much nor was likely to pose a danger to anyone.

(3) When the elephant died, the town would take full possession of the land donated by the developer.

(4) The elephant could become the town's symbol.

The long debate reached the conclusion that the town would take charge of the elephant after all. As an old, well-established residential suburb, the town boasted a relatively affluent citizenry, and its financial footing was sound. The adoption of a homeless elephant was a move that people could look upon favorably. People like old elephants better than sewers and fire engines.

I myself was all in favor of having the town care for the elephant. True, I was getting sick of high-rise condos, but I liked the idea of my town's owning an elephant.

A wooded area was cleared, and the elementary school's aging gym was moved there as an elephant house. The man who had served as the elephant's keeper for many years would come to live in the house with the elephant. The children's lunch scraps

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ELEGY

The ambulance is gone. The squall's
ragged edge fingers
the fresh green stitchings on the alder trees.
Its belly cracks open and pours

through the timbered swale in back of the house
where, with the lights lit early,
the dangerous hours

of a slowly imploding
spring evening circle
the person left behind to answer the calls.

Friend, you're in the hands of professionals now—
shaved and scoured,
black life mask strapped to your mouth,

ampules of glycerine, plasma
by the quart blossoming in the branches
of your temporary yard, your eyes
reflecting the oscillating lines—

and your heart's plush chambers fibrillate,
in distention darken and swell
three times their size,

swelling in one perpendicular
effort until they
collapse at last.
Friend, it grieves me that you're breaking

your promise to take me hunting.
This fall, you said, on opening day,
when the alders

are nervous with change,
you'd come to my door and we'd drive
the Upper Bay Road to the blind.

—Vijay Seshadri

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"Divide and conquer. Then, a merger."

would serve as the elephant's feed. Finally, the elephant itself was carted in a trailer to its new home, there to live out its remaining years.

I joined the crowd at the elephant-house dedication ceremonies. Standing before the elephant, the mayor delivered a speech (on the town's development and the enrichment of its cultural facilities); one elementary-school pupil, representing the student body, stood up to read a composition ("Please live a long and healthy life, Mr. Elephant"); there was a sketch contest (sketching the elephant thereafter became an integral component of the pupils' artistic education); and each of two young women in swaying dresses (neither of whom was especially good-looking) fed the elephant a bunch of bananas. The elephant endured these virtually meaningless (for the elephant, entirely meaningless) formalities with hardly a twitch, and it chomped on the bananas with a vacant stare. When it finished eating the bananas, everyone applauded.

On its right rear leg, the elephant wore a solid, heavy-looking steel cuff from which there stretched a thick chain perhaps thirty feet long, and this in turn was securely fastened to a concrete slab. Anyone could see what a sturdy anchor held the beast in place: the elephant could have struggled with all its might for a hundred years and never broken the thing.

I couldn't tell if the elephant was bothered by its shackle. On the surface, at least, it seemed all but unconscious of the enormous chunk of metal wrapped around its leg. It kept its blank gaze fixed on some indeterminate point in space, its ears and the few white hairs on its body waving gently in the breeze.

The elephant's keeper was a small, bony old man. It was hard to guess his age; he could have been in his early sixties or late seventies. He was one of those people whose appearance is no longer influenced by their age after they pass a certain point in life. His skin had the same darkly ruddy, sunburned look both summer and winter, his hair was stiff and short, his eyes were small. His face had no distinguishing characteristics, but his almost perfectly circular ears stuck out on either side with disturbing prominence.

He was not an unfriendly man. If someone spoke to him he would reply, and he expressed himself clearly. If he wanted to he could be almost charming—though you always knew he was somewhat ill at ease. Generally, he remained a reticent, lonely-looking old man. He seemed to like the children who visited the elephant house, and he worked at being nice to them, but the children never really warmed to him.

The only one who did that was the elephant. The keeper lived in a small prefab room attached to the elephant house, and all day long he stayed with the elephant, attending to its needs. They had been together for more than ten years, and you could sense their closeness in every gesture and look. Whenever the elephant was standing there blankly and the keeper wanted it to move, all he had to do was stand next to the elephant, tap it on a front leg, and whisper something in its ear. Then, swaying its huge bulk, the elephant would go exactly where the keeper had indicated, take up its new position, and continue staring at a point in space.

On weekends, I would drop by the elephant house and study these operations, but I could never figure out the principle on which the keeper-elephant communication was based. Maybe the elephant understood a few simple words (it had certainly been living long enough), or perhaps it received its information through variations in the taps on its leg. Or possibly it had some special power resembling mental telepathy and could read the keeper's mind. I once asked the keeper how he gave his orders to the elephant, but the old man just smiled and said, "We've been together a long time."

AND so a year went by. Then, without warning, the elephant vanished. One day it was there, and the next it had ceased to be.

I poured myself a second cup of coffee and read the story again from beginning to end. Actually, it was a pretty strange article—the kind that might excite Sherlock Holmes. "Look at this, Watson," he'd say, tapping his pipe. "A very interesting article. Very interesting indeed."

What gave the article its air of

strangeness was the obvious confusion and bewilderment of the reporter. And this confusion and bewilderment clearly came from the absurdity of the situation itself. You could see how the reporter had struggled to find clever ways around the absurdity in order to write a "normal" article. But the struggle had only driven his confusion and bewilderment to a hopeless extreme.

For example, the article used such expressions as "the elephant escaped," but if you looked at the entire piece it became obvious that the elephant had in no way "escaped." It had vanished into thin air. The reporter revealed his own conflicted state of mind by saying that a few "details" remained "unclear," but this was not a phenomenon that could be disposed of by using such ordinary terminology as "details" or "unclear," I felt.

First, there was the problem of the steel cuff that had been fastened to the elephant's leg. This had been found *still locked*. The most reasonable explanation for this would be that the keeper had unlocked the ring, removed it from the elephant's leg, *locked the ring again*, and run off with the elephant—a hypothesis to which the paper clung with desperate tenacity despite the fact that the keeper had no key! Only two keys existed, and they, for security's sake, were kept in locked safes, one in police headquarters and the other in the firehouse, both beyond the reach of the keeper—or of anyone else who might attempt to steal them. And even if someone had succeeded in stealing a key, there was no need whatever for that person to make a point of returning the key after using it. Yet the following morning both keys were found in their respective safes at the police and fire stations. Which brings us to the conclusion that the elephant pulled its leg out of that solid steel ring without the aid of a key—an absolute impossibility unless someone had sawed the foot off.

The second problem was the route of escape. The elephant house and grounds were surrounded by a massive fence nearly ten feet high. The question of security had been hotly debated in the town council, and the town had settled upon a system that might be considered somewhat excessive for keeping one old elephant. Heavy iron bars had been anchored in a thick concrete foundation (the cost of the fence was borne by the real-estate company), and there was only a single entrance, which was found locked from the inside. There was no way the elephant could have escaped from this fortresslike enclosure.

The third problem was elephant tracks. Directly behind the elephant enclosure was a steep hill, which the animal could not possibly have climbed, so even if we suppose that the elephant somehow managed to pull its leg out of the steel ring and leap over the ten-foot-high fence, it would still have had to escape down the path to the front of the enclosure, and there was not a single mark anywhere in the soft earth of that path that could be seen as an elephant's footprint.

Riddled as it was with such perplexities and labored circumlocutions, the newspaper article as a whole left but one possible conclusion: the elephant had not escaped. It had vanished.

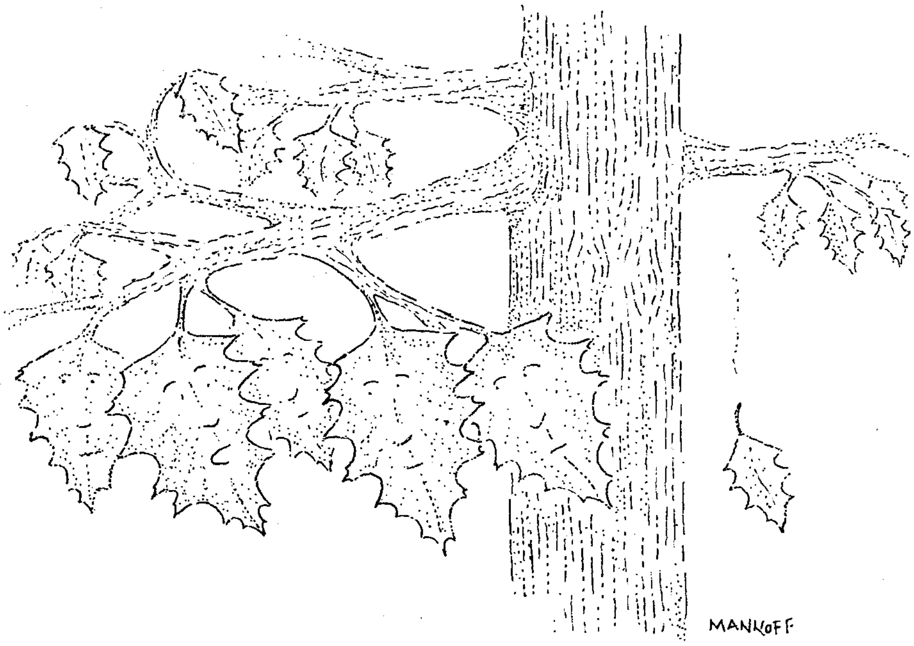
Needless to say, however, neither the newspaper nor the police nor the mayor was willing to admit—openly, at least—that the elephant had vanished. The police were continuing to investigate, their spokesman saying only that the elephant either "was taken or was allowed to escape in a clever, deliberately calculated move. Because of the difficulty involved in hiding an elephant, it is only a matter of time till we solve the case." To this optimistic assessment he added that they were planning to search the woods in the area with the aid of local hunters' clubs and sharpshooters from the national Self-Defense Force.

The mayor had held a news conference, in which he apologized for the inadequacy of the town's police resources. At the same time, he declared, "Our elephant-security system is in no way inferior to similar facilities in any zoo in the country. Indeed, it is far stronger and far more fail-safe than the standard cage." He also observed, "This is a dangerous and senseless anti-social act of the most malicious kind, and we cannot allow it to go unpunished."

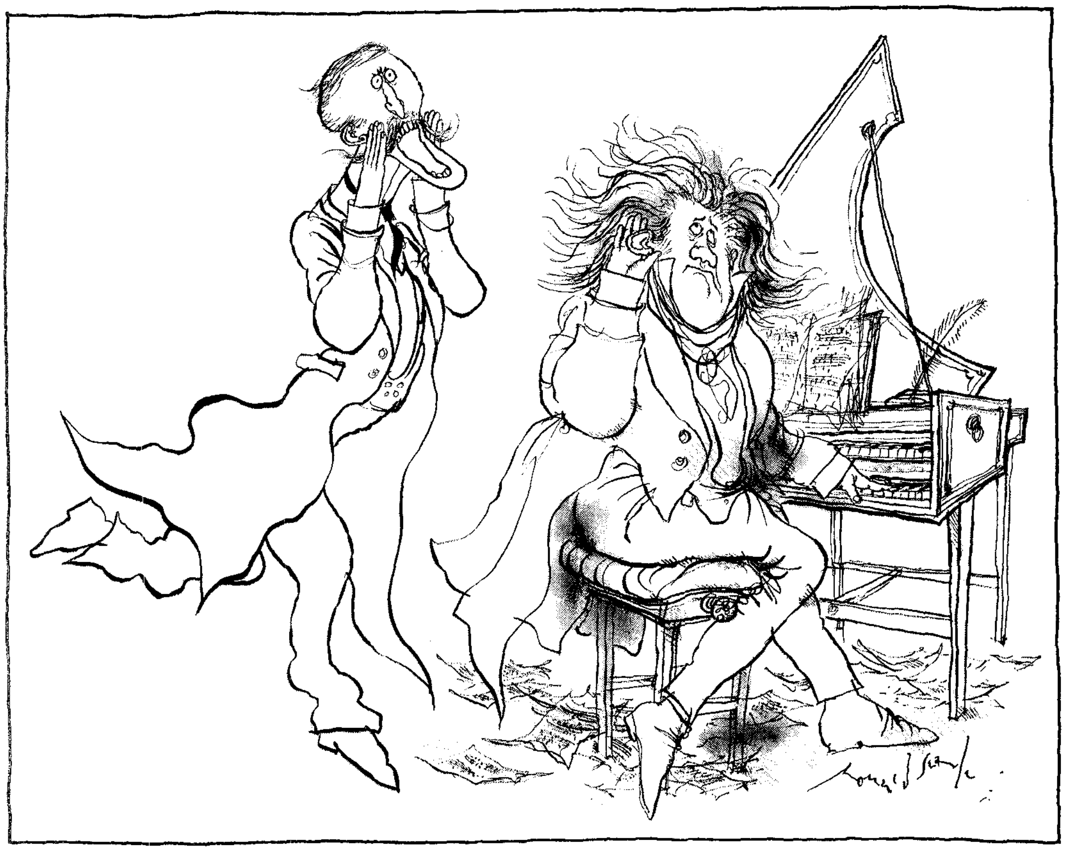
As they had the year before, the opposition-party members of the town council made accusations. "We intend to look into the political responsibility of the mayor; he has colluded with private enterprise in order to sell the townspeople a bill of goods on the solution of the elephant problem."

One "worried-looking" mother, thirty-seven, was interviewed by the paper. "Now I'm afraid to let my children out to play," she said.

The coverage included a detailed summary of the steps leading to the town's decision to adopt the elephant, an aerial sketch of the elephant house and grounds, and brief histories of both the elephant and the keeper who had vanished with it. The man, Noboru Watanabe, sixty-three, was from Tateyama, in Chiba Prefecture. He had worked for many years as a keeper in the mammalian section of the zoo,



"Personally, I'd rather be incinerated than composted."



CROSSED PATHS

Munch Meets Beethoven

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and "had the complete trust of the zoo authorities, both for his abundant knowledge of these animals and for his warm, sincere personality." The elephant had been sent from East Africa twenty-two years earlier, but little was known about its exact age or its "personality." The report concluded with a request from the police for citizens of the town to come forward with any information they might have regarding the elephant.

I thought about this request for a while as I drank my second cup of coffee, but I decided not to call the police—both because I preferred not to come into contact with them if I could help it and because I felt the police would not believe what I had to tell them. What good would it do to talk to people like that, who would not even consider the possibility that the elephant had simply vanished?

I took my scrapbook down from the shelf, cut out the elephant article, and pasted it in. Then I washed the dishes and left for the office.

I watched the search on the seven-o'clock news. There were hunters carrying large-bore rifles loaded with tranquillizer darts, Self-Defense Force troops, policemen, and firemen combing every square inch of the woods and hills in the immediate area as helicopters hovered overhead. Of course, we're talking about the kind of "woods" and "hills" you find in the suburbs outside Tokyo, so they didn't have an enormous area to cover. With that many people involved, a day should have been more than enough to do the job. And they weren't searching for some tiny homicidal maniac: they were after a huge African elephant. There was a limit to the number of places a thing like that could hide. But still they had not managed to find it. The chief of police appeared on the screen, saying, "We intend to continue the search." And the anchorman concluded the report, "Who released the elephant, and how? Where have they hidden it? What was their motive? Everything remains shrouded in mystery."

The search went on for several days, but the authorities were unable to discover a single clue to the elephant's whereabouts. I studied the newspaper reports, clipped them all, and pasted them in my scrapbook—including editorial cartoons on the subject. The album filled up quickly, and I had to buy another. Despite their enormous volume, the clippings contained not one fact of the kind that I was looking for. The reports were either pointless or off the mark: "ELEPHANT STILL MISSING," "GLOOM THICK IN SEARCH HQ," "MOB BEHIND DISAPPEARANCE?" And even articles like this became noticeably scarcer after a week had gone by, until there was virtually nothing. A few of the weekly magazines carried sensational stories—one even hired a psychic—but they had nothing to substantiate their wild headlines. It seemed that people were beginning to shove the elephant case into the large category of "unsolvable mysteries." The disappearance of one old elephant and one old elephant keeper would have no impact on the course of society. The earth would continue its monotonous rotations, politicians would continue issuing unreliable proclamations, people would continue yawning on their way to the office, children would continue studying for their college-entrance exams. Amid the endless surge and ebb of everyday life, interest in a missing elephant could not last forever. And so a number of unremarkable months went by, like a tired army marching past a window.

Whenever I had a spare moment, I would visit the house where the elephant no longer lived. A thick chain had been wrapped round and round the bars of the yard's iron gate, to keep people out. Peering inside, I could see that the elephant-house door had also been chained and locked, as though the police were trying to make up for having failed to find the elephant by multiplying the layers of security on the now empty elephant house. The area was deserted, the previous crowds having been replaced by a flock of pigeons resting on the roof. No one took care of the grounds any longer, and thick, green summer grass had sprung up there as if it had been waiting for this opportunity. The chain coiled around the door of the elephant house reminded me of a huge snake set to guard a ruined palace in a thick forest. A few short months without its elephant had given the place an air of doom and desolation that hung there like a huge, oppressive rain cloud.

I MET her near the end of September. It had been raining that day from morning to night—the kind of soft, monotonous, misty rain that often falls at that time of year, washing away bit by bit the memories of summer burned into the earth. Coursing down the gutters, all those memories flowed into the sewers and rivers, to be carried to the deep, dark ocean.

We noticed each other at the party my company threw to launch its new advertising campaign. I work for the P.R. section of a major manufacturer of electrical appliances, and at the time I was in charge of publicity for a coördinated line of kitchen equipment, which was scheduled to go on the market in time for the autumn-wedding and winter-bonus seasons. My job was to negotiate with several women's magazines for tie-in articles—not the kind of work that takes a great deal of intelligence, but I had to see to it that the articles they wrote didn't smack of advertising. When magazines gave us publicity, we rewarded them by placing ads in their pages. They scratched our backs, we scratched theirs.

As an editor of a magazine for young housewives, she had come to the party for material for one of these "articles." I happened to be in charge of showing her around, pointing out the features of the colorful refrigerators and coffeemakers and microwave ovens and juicers that a famous Italian designer had done for us.

"The most important point is unity," I explained. "Even the most beautifully designed item dies if it is out of balance with its surroundings. Unity of design, unity of color, unity of function: this is what today's *kit-chin* needs above all else. Research tells us that a housewife spends the largest part of her day in the *kit-chin*. The *kit-chin* is her workplace, her study, her living room. Which is why she does all she can to make the *kit-chin* a pleasant place to be. It has nothing to do with size. Whether it's large or small, one fundamental principle governs every successful *kit-chin*, and that principle is unity. This is the concept underlying the design of our new series. Look at this cooktop, for example. . . ."

She nodded and scribbled things in a small notebook, but it was obvious that she had little interest in the material, nor did I have any personal stake in our new cooktop. Both of us were doing our jobs.

"You know a lot about kitchens," she said when I was finished. She used the Japanese word, without picking up on "*kit-chin*."

"That's what I do for a living," I answered with a professional smile. "Aside from that, though, I do like to cook. Nothing fancy, but I cook for myself every day."

"Still, I wonder if unity is all that necessary for a kitchen."

"We say '*kit-chin*,'" I advised her. "No big deal, but the company wants us to use the English."

"Oh. Sorry. But still, I wonder. Is unity so important for a *kit-chin*? What do *you* think?"

"My personal opinion? That doesn't come out until I take my necktie off," I said with a grin. "But today I'll make an exception. A kitchen probably *does* need a few things more than it needs unity. But those other elements are things you can't sell. And in this pragmatic world of ours, things you can't sell don't count for much."

"*Is* the world such a pragmatic place?"

I took out a cigarette and lit it with my lighter.

"I don't know—the word just popped out," I said. "But it explains a lot. It makes work easier, too. You can play games with it, make up neat expressions: 'essentially pragmatic,' or 'pragmatic in essence.' If you look at things

AFTERMATHS

A HAPPY MAN

Michaux, in a poem,
is complaining
that life brought him

everything
but the one thing
he truly wanted—

a little thing,
so little he is unable
even to describe it,

but which alone,
he knows, can save him,
and make him

a happy man.

BIOGRAPHY OF A WOMAN

Awakening, I thought,
How are you, and where?
Beside yourself, perhaps,
at your aunt's or your father's funeral?
If so, how would your face set then:
grim or prim?

Would you, among all the heartless mourners,
cry out to them

• •

I am in such pain
or keep mum?

You, my dear, who believe
so deeply in heaven,
who once told me,
out of your fifty-odd years
of travel back and forth to hell:
This time the child must win

the child within.

TRAKL

That night, as if in a dream,
I saw my own breath disappear,
caught in the vapor of a looking glass,

and knew I was deep at the frontier
of *Oh has it come to this* . . .

Suddenly, with no place to hide,
I had a rifle on my shoulder,
and others beside me, as we tramped
to a similar disaster . . .

Over us, a flag torn to pieces
howled in a gnarled and squally air,
as bullets do in the heat of battle

or infants alone in a nursery.

—ROBERT MAZZOCCO

• •

that way, you avoid all kinds of complicated problems.”

“What an interesting view!”

“Not really. It’s what everybody thinks. Oh, by the way, we’ve got some pretty good champagne. Care to have some?”

“Thanks. I’d love to.”

As we chatted over champagne, we realized we had several mutual acquaintances. Since our part of the business world was not a very big pond, if you tossed in a few pebbles one or two were bound to hit a mutual acquaintance. In addition, she and my kid sister happened to have graduated from the same university. With markers like this to follow, our conversation went along smoothly.

She was unmarried, and so was I. She was twenty-six, and I was thirty-one. She wore contact lenses, and I wore glasses. She praised my necktie, and I praised her jacket. We compared rents and complained about our jobs and salaries. In other words, we were beginning to like each other. She was an attractive woman, and not at all pushy. I stood there talking with her for a full twenty minutes, unable to discover a single reason not to think well of her.

As the party was breaking up, I invited her to join me in the hotel’s cocktail lounge, where we settled in to continue our conversation. A soundless rain went on falling outside the lounge’s panoramic window, the lights of the city sending blurry messages through the mist. A damp hush held sway over the nearly empty cocktail lounge. She ordered a frozen Daiquiri and I had a Scotch-on-the-rocks.

Sipping our drinks, we carried on the kind of conversation that a man and woman have in a bar when they have just met and are beginning to like each other. We talked about our college days, our tastes in music, sports, our daily routines.

Then I told her about the elephant. Exactly how this happened, I can’t recall. Maybe we were talking about something having to do with animals, and that was the connection. Or maybe, unconsciously, I had been looking for someone—a good listener—to whom I could present my own, unique view on the elephant’s disappearance. Or, then again, it might have been the liquor that got me talking.

In any case, the second the words left my mouth, I knew that I had brought up one of the least suitable topics I could have found for this occasion. No, I should never have mentioned the elephant. The topic was—what?—too complete, too closed.

I tried to hurry on to something else, but, as luck would have it, she was more interested than most in the case of the vanishing elephant, and once I admitted that I had seen the elephant many times she showered me with questions—what kind of elephant was it, how did I think it had escaped, what did it eat, wasn’t it a danger to the community, and so forth.

I told her nothing more than what everybody knew from the news, but she seemed to sense constraint in my tone of voice. I had never been good at telling lies.

As if she had not noticed anything strange about my behavior, she sipped her second Daiquiri and asked, “Weren’t you shocked when the elephant disappeared? It’s not the kind of thing that somebody could have predicted.”

“No, probably not,” I said. I took a pretzel from the mound in the glass dish on our table, snapped it in two, and ate half. The waiter replaced our ashtray with an empty one.

She looked at me expectantly. I took out another cigarette and lit it. I had quit smoking three years earlier but had begun again when the elephant disappeared.

“Why ‘probably not’? You mean you could have predicted it?”

“No, of course I couldn’t have predicted it,” I said with a smile. “For an elephant to disappear all of a sudden one day—there’s no precedent, no need, for such a thing to happen. It doesn’t make any logical sense.”

“But still, your answer was very strange. When I said, ‘It’s not the kind of thing that somebody could have predicted,’ you said, ‘No, probably not.’ Most people would have said, ‘You’re right,’ or ‘Yeah, it’s weird,’ or something. See what I mean?”

I sent a vague nod in her direction and raised my hand to call the waiter. A kind of tentative silence took hold as I waited for him to bring me my next Scotch.

"I'm finding this a little hard to grasp," she said softly. "You were carrying on a perfectly normal conversation with me until a couple of minutes ago—at least until the subject of the elephant came up. Then something funny happened. I can't understand you anymore. Something's wrong. Is it the elephant? Or are my ears playing tricks on me?"

"There's nothing wrong with your ears," I said.

"So then it's you. The problem's with you."

I stuck my finger in my glass and stirred the ice. I like the sound of ice in a whiskey glass.

"I wouldn't call it a 'problem,' exactly. It's not that big a deal. I'm not hiding anything. I'm just not sure I can talk about it very well, so I'm trying not to say anything at all. But you're right—it's very strange."

"What do you mean?"

It was no use: I'd have to tell her the story. I took one gulp of whiskey and started.

"The thing is, I was probably the last one to see the elephant before it disappeared. I saw it after seven o'clock on the evening of May 17th, and they noticed it was gone on the afternoon of the eighteenth. Nobody saw it in between, because they lock the elephant house at six."

"I don't get it. If they closed the house at six, how did you see it after seven?"

"There's a kind of cliff behind the elephant house. A steep hill on private property, with no real roads. There's one spot, on the back of the hill, where you can see into the elephant house. I'm probably the only one who knows about it."

I had found the spot purely by chance. Strolling through the area one Sunday afternoon, I had lost my way and come out at the top of the cliff. I found a little flat open patch, just big enough for a person to stretch out in, and when I looked down through the bushes there was the elephant-house roof. Below the edge of the roof was a fairly large vent opening, and through it I had a clear view of the inside of the elephant house.

I made it a habit after that to visit the place every now and then to look at the elephant when it was inside the house. If anyone had asked me why I bothered doing such a thing I wouldn't have had a decent answer. I simply enjoyed watching the elephant during its private time. There was nothing more to it than that. I couldn't see the elephant when the house was dark inside, of course, but in the early hours of the evening the keeper would have the lights on the whole time he was taking care of the elephant, which enabled me to study the scene in detail.

What struck me immediately when I saw the elephant and keeper alone together was the obvious liking they had for each other—something they never displayed when they were out before the public. Their affection was evident in every gesture. It almost seemed as if they stored away their emotions during the day, taking care not to let anyone notice them, and took them out at night when they could be alone. Which is not to say that they did anything different when they were by themselves inside. The elephant just stood there, as blank as ever, and the keeper would perform those tasks one would normally expect him to do as a keeper: scrubbing down the elephant with a deck broom, picking up the elephant's enormous droppings, cleaning up after the elephant ate. But there was no way to mistake the special warmth, the sense of trust between them. While the keeper swept the floor, the elephant would wave its trunk and pat the keeper's back. I liked to watch the elephant doing that.

"Have you always been fond of elephants?" she asked. "I mean, not just that particular elephant?"

"Hmm . . . come to think of it, I do like elephants," I said. "There's something about them that excites me. I guess I've always liked them. I wonder why."

"And that day, too, after the sun went down, I suppose you were up on the hill by yourself, looking at the elephant. May—what day was it?"

"The seventeenth. May 17th at 7 P.M. The days were already very long by then, and the sky had a reddish glow, but the lights were on in the elephant house."

"And was there anything unusual about the elephant or the keeper?"

"Well, there was and there wasn't. I can't say exactly. It's not as if they were standing right in front of me. I'm probably not the most reliable witness."

"What did happen, exactly?"

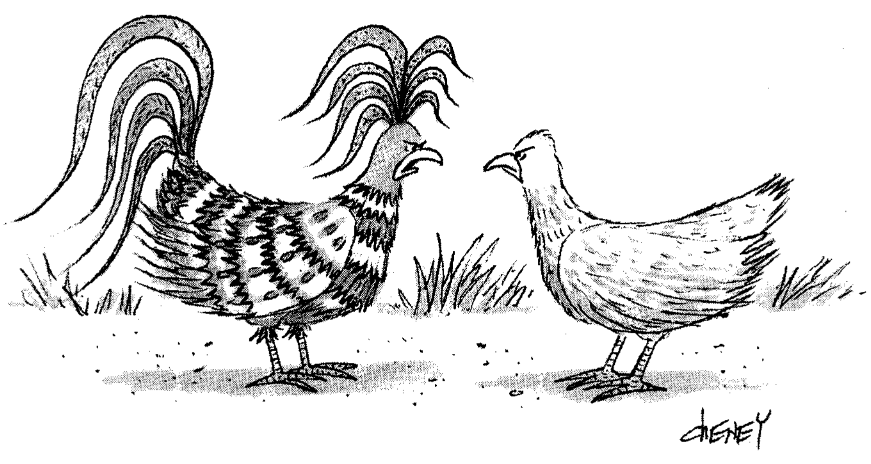
I took a swallow of my now somewhat watery Scotch. The rain outside the windows was still coming down, no stronger or weaker than before, a static element in a landscape that would never change.

"Nothing happened, really. The elephant and the keeper were doing what they always did—cleaning, eating, playing around with each other in that friendly way of theirs. It wasn't what they *did* that was different. It's the way they looked. Something about the balance between them."

"The balance?"

"In size. Of their bodies. The elephant's and the keeper's. The balance seemed to have changed somewhat. I had the feeling that to some extent the difference between them had shrunk."

She kept her gaze fixed on her Daiquiri glass for a time. I could see that the ice had melted and the water was working its way through the cocktail like a tiny ocean current.



"I refuse to apologize for having plumage!"

GET REAL
77
IT'S JUST A GAME
26
CBarsotti

“Meaning that the elephant had gotten smaller?”

“Or the keeper had gotten bigger. Or both simultaneously.”

“And you didn’t tell this to the police?”

“No, of course not,” I said. “I’m sure they wouldn’t have believed me. And if I had told them I was watching the elephant from the cliff at a time like that I’d have ended up as their Number One suspect.”

“Still, are you *certain* that the balance between them had changed?”

“Probably. I can only say ‘probably.’ I don’t have any proof, and, as I keep saying, I was looking at them through the air vent. But I had looked at them like that I don’t know how many times before, so it’s hard for me to believe that I could make a mistake about something as basic as the relation of their sizes.”

In fact, I had wondered at the time whether my eyes were playing tricks on me. I had tried closing and opening them and shaking my head, but the elephant’s size remained the same. It definitely looked as if it had shrunk—so much so that at first I thought the town might have got hold of a new, smaller elephant. But I hadn’t heard anything to that effect, and I would never have missed any news reports about elephants. If this was not a new elephant, the only possible conclusion was that the old elephant had, for one reason or another, shrunk. As I watched, it became obvious to me that this smaller elephant had all the same gestures as the old one. It would stamp happily on the ground with its right foot while it was being washed, and with its now somewhat narrower trunk it would pat the keeper on the back.

It was a mysterious sight. Looking through the vent, I had the feeling that a different, chilling kind of time was flowing through the elephant house—but nowhere else. And it seemed to me, too, that the elephant and the keeper were gladly giving themselves over to this new order that was trying to envelop them—or that had already partially succeeded in enveloping them.

Altogether, I was probably watching the scene in the elephant house for less than half an hour. The lights went out at seven-thirty—much earlier than usual—and, from that point on, everything was wrapped in darkness. I waited in my spot, hoping that the lights would go on again, but they never did. That was the last I saw of the elephant.

“So, then, you believe that the elephant kept shrinking until it was small enough to escape through the bars, or else that it simply dissolved into nothingness. Is that it?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “All I’m trying to do is recall what I saw with my own eyes, as accurately as possible. I’m hardly thinking about what happened after that. The visual image I have is so strong that, to be honest, it’s practically impossible for me to go beyond it.”

That was all I could say about the elephant’s disappearance. And, just as I had feared, the story of the elephant was too particular, too complete in itself to work as a topic of conversation between a young man and woman who had just met. A silence descended upon us after I had finished my tale. What subject could either of us bring up after a story about an elephant that had vanished—a story that offered virtually no openings for further discussion? She ran her finger around the edge of her cocktail glass, and I sat there reading and rereading the words stamped on my coaster. I never should have told her about the elephant. It was not the kind of story you could tell freely to anyone.

“When I was a little girl, our cat disappeared,” she offered after a long silence. “But still, for a cat to disappear and for an elephant to disappear—those are two different stories.”

“Yeah, really. There’s no comparison. Think of the size difference.”

Thirty minutes later, we were saying goodbye outside the hotel. She suddenly remembered that she had left her umbrella in the cocktail lounge, so I went up in the elevator and brought it down to her. It was a brick-red umbrella with a large handle.

“Thanks,” she said.

“Good night,” I said.

That was the last time I saw her. We talked once on the phone after that, about some details in her tie-in article. While we spoke, I thought seriously about inviting her out for dinner, but I ended up not doing it. It just didn’t seem to matter one way or the other.

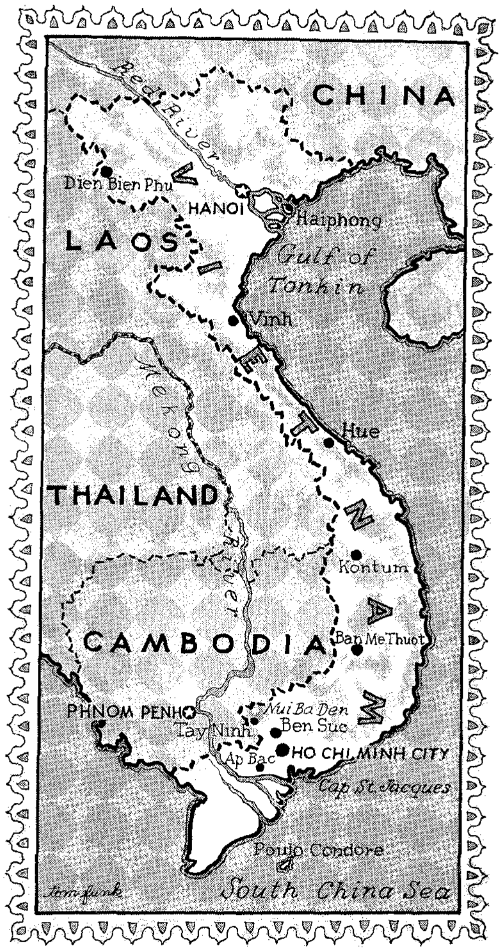
I felt like this a lot after my experience with the vanishing elephant. I would begin to think I wanted to do something, but then I would become incapable of distinguishing between the probable results of doing it and of not doing it. I often get the feeling that things around me have lost their proper balance, though it could be that my perceptions are playing tricks on me. Some kind of balance inside me has broken down since the elephant affair, and maybe that causes external phenomena to strike my eye in a strange way. It’s probably something in me.

The papers print almost nothing about the elephant anymore. People seem to have forgotten that their town once owned an elephant. The grass that took over the elephant enclosure has withered now, and the area has the feel of winter. —HARUKI MURAKAMI

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Jay Rubin.*)

A REPORTER AT LARGE

IN VIETNAM



BEN SUC and its people have taken nearly the worst that a superpower can give. In January of 1967, the village was one of the focal points of a United States Army scorched-earth operation to destroy a Communist-guerrilla base area known as the Iron Triangle, in the rubber-plantation country north of Saigon. Almost all the inhabitants were rounded up and forcibly removed in helicopters, trucks, and river landing craft, and their houses and family graves were bulldozed behind them. Those who hid and stayed with the guerrillas were strafed by day and hunted at night by special helicopter teams called Night Hawks, which used searchlights to trap the unwary in the glare for the machine gunners aboard. The Americans made war on the land, too, blasting it with bombs and shells, searing it with napalm and white-phosphorus munitions, and stripping it of trees and vegetation with defoliants sprayed from the air.

The village of Ben Suc, whose devastation was well known because of a 1967 account by Jonathan Schell, was at the northwest corner of the Iron Triangle, which encompassed two Communist districts, Cu Chi and Ben Cat. Communist strength in the region derived from conditions on the French rubber plantations in colonial times. When Vietnamese workers arrived at a plantation, they were deprived of their names and were assigned identification numbers. One in four died from disease or maltreatment. In the nineteen-thirties, the area became a political stronghold of Communist labor organizing, and after 1945 it also became a military stronghold as the rubber workers and the farmers in the villages around the plantations took up the cause of Ho Chi Minh during the war for independence from France.

Because of its proximity to Saigon, the Iron Triangle was regarded as a major menace. The first American attempt to wipe it out occurred in the early nineteen-sixties. The population was herded into so-called strategic hamlets, which were fortified and guarded enclosures surrounded by barbed wire. The guerrillas, whom the Americans referred to as the Vietcong (an abbreviation for "Vietnamese Communists"), soon grew strong enough to overrun the enclosures and turn the peasants loose to rebuild their original homes. The American-supported Saigon regime then resorted to bombing and shelling to try to drive out the peasants, but that tactic also failed. On a recent trip that took us to both northern and southern Vietnam, we encountered Phan Van Chinh, who was the Communist Party Secretary for Ben Suc back then and, as such, commander of the village guerrillas. Farmers, Chinh told us, had been reluctant to abandon their rice fields and fruit orchards for the poverty of refugee camps, and, despite the ferocity of the war, the peasants had been as militant as ever in their support of the Communist cause. After the Johnson Administration intervened in full force, in 1965, United States Army generals decided that mass evacuation and razing were the solution to the problem.

We met Chinh at a council house in Ben Suc—a building that had not existed on that morning in January of 1967 when the scorched-earth operation began. Two incoming helicopters used a soccer field as a landing zone, Chinh said, and other helicopters set down along a road leading to a ferry point at a bend in the Saigon River, which forms the lower boundary of the village. Chinh, who is now in his mid-sixties, has no sight in his left eye, and his left knee is rigid—results of injuries from an American artillery shell that burst near him in the war. He also lost all the teeth on the left side of his mouth, and he has to wear glasses with a thick lens in order to see with his right eye. He still has a commanding voice, and he spoke with animation as he told about the American attack, pointing down emphatically when he described how the first helicopter landed right where the council house was subsequently built.

Some ten thousand people were evacuated from Ben Suc, we were told. The normal population of the village in those days was about fifty-six hundred, Chinh said, but it had nearly doubled by the time of the American attack, because families bombed out of neighboring villages had taken shelter there with friends and relatives. The Americans brought with them soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, or ARVN, and these soldiers began rounding up the villagers. Many of the people, carrying what belongings they could, were herded into big cargo helicopters, which had arrived after smaller assault helicopters brought in American infantrymen to secure the area. Other people were marched down to the ferry point at the river and loaded onto landing craft that had pulled up there. People who tried to run away were shot. United States Army bulldozers demolished nine hundred and fifty houses, levelling the village. Only three hundred and forty of the people managed to hide and stay behind, and from that day forward they had to live underground, in dugouts and tunnels. By April 30, 1975, when Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese Army, it was hard to find a building of any description still standing in the area. The official United States Army maps illustrate what occurred. A 1967 map shows the main dirt road connecting the village to the river and the outside world as a well-surfaced one, usable in the rainy season. On a 1972 map, a thin broken line indicates that the road had been reduced to an ox-cart track.

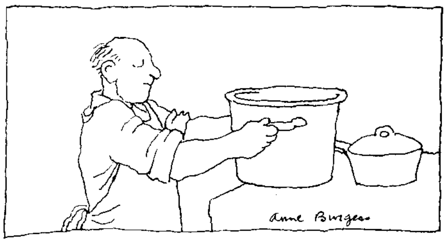
After the war, it took the Vietnamese ten years to rebuild the village and reclaim the land. During the rebuilding, perhaps fifty people were killed or wounded when they accidentally hit unexploded bombs, mines, or grenades. The reconstruction started right after the Communist victory in 1975, we were told by Nguyen Thanh Liem, a slim, bold-spoken man in his early thirties, who is the current Party Secretary for the village. Liem had been taken from Ben Suc as a ten-year-old child, and had spent his youth in a resettlement area to the south, closer to Saigon, where the families from Ben Suc were forced to live. The people of Ben Suc were eager to return, he said, because the land in the resettlement area was poor, and no one had been able to earn a living; they had subsisted on what they could grow and on handouts.

Liem, who succeeded Chinh as Party Secretary only the year before we came, had not been expecting American visitors to his village. We had decided to make a trip to Ben Suc our first excursion out of Ho Chi Minh City (as Saigon and its environs have been called since 1975), and had driven there on a Saturday with Duong Quang Thang and Tran Le Tien, guide-interpreters provided by the Foreign Ministry. The Ho Chi Minh City Office of External Affairs had rented us a sturdy Russian Volga, a black four-door sedan that reminded us of a nineteen-sixties Chevrolet.

When questions at the marketplace and the council house determined that we had found the right village (its official name is now Thanh Tuyen, but the locals still call the village by its original name of Ben Suc), someone sent for Liem. Then, while we and our guides waited in the council house, he dispatched the Volga, with a villager to give the driver directions, to fetch Chinh and two other men who had been wartime guerrillas. When everyone was assembled, several young women brought in trays of refreshing iced washcloths and green coconuts with straws for drinking the milk.

As was true of other communities where most of the population sided with the Communists during the war and suffered severely for it, Ben Suc had been reconstructed with financial help from the central government. The council house had been the first substantial structure built, in 1978. It had two small wings for village offices, and a larger room in the center, where we sat. This room had wooden benches and a podium in front for meetings of the People's Committee—the term for a government administrative body in Vietnam, both urban and rural—and of the village branch of the Vietnamese Communist Party. On the wall behind the podium were hand-painted portraits of Karl Marx, Ho Chi Minh, and Lenin. A clinic and a one-story red brick schoolhouse with enough classroom capacity to take the village children through the twelfth grade are of more recent vintage.

We asked to see the new buildings, and walked first to the school. In front of the schoolyard was a bomb crater that the villagers had nearly finished filling in—one of a string of two or three hundred craters from a B-52 strike that had been laid right through Ben Suc. Most of the craters had now been filled—"little by little," Liem said. Behind the vegetable garden of a nearby house was a crater that had not been filled in. It was about twenty-five feet across and fifteen deep but was not noticeable from a distance, because the homeowner had planted bamboo inside the hole to make some use of it, and the bamboo had grown tall enough to disguise it. The giveaway was a bamboo fence around the edge to keep livestock from falling in. The area in front of the new clinic was puzzling—humpy and overgrown. The brush-covered humps were what was left of a family graveyard that had been partly levelled by United States Army bulldozers. Liem said that the American soldiers had discovered some Vietcong tunnels nearby and had apparently bulldozed the graves to block the entrances. The family concerned had since refused either to restore the graves or to move the remains elsewhere.



Two carts drawn by teams of oxen were headed down the village road toward a nearby rubber plantation. In addition to rebuilding their own village, the people of Ben Suc played a major role in restoring the plantation, which had been called the Guibert Plantation in colonial times. During the war, rubber plantations were favored places for the Vietcong to hide and fight, because the foliage gave concealment and the rows of trees provided deadly lanes for fields of fire. As a result, rubber plantations in the South—the principal agricultural resource of the region after rice farming—were systematically eradicated under Operation Ranch Hand, the United States Air Force's code name for spraying chemicals that killed the trees. Virtually all the trees on the Guibert Plantation had died. The place is now a Vietnamese-government enterprise, founded with Soviet economic assistance. Recently, the villagers of Ben Suc planted five thousand new trees there in return for wages and the promise of a share in the profits when, after a few years, the trees start producing marketable latex.

WHILE we were in the North, we met with General Vo Nguyen Giap, who led the Vietnamese forces to victory over the French at Dien Bien Phu in May of 1954. Giap was seventy-eight years old when we saw him, in Hanoi, and the Vietnamese had recently celebrated the thirty-fifth anniversary of the victory. He met us in the reception room of the State Guest House, a colonial mansion that had once been the residence of the French High Commissioner for the northern part of Vietnam. Before we could begin what our hosts had scheduled as a formal interview, he said to us, in French, "We'll chat."

Giap began the chat by telling us of his boyhood in the colonial days. He came from a provincial-mandarin fam-

TV
ATV
Dana Fradon

ily, and his father, who had been educated in the Confucian classics, taught him how to read Vietnamese written in the pre-French way—in Chinese characters. He remembered sitting at home, cross-legged in Vietnamese fashion, reading about Ham Nghi, a heroic boy emperor whose mandarins had raised a major revolt against the French in the eighteen-eighties, and about Duy Tan, the emperor who was deposed by the French in 1916 for plotting an insurrection among Vietnamese troops recruited for France's First World War battlefields. Giap's maternal grandfather had been the rebel commander of a province during Ham Nghi's revolt, and his mother talked to him of how the French troops had come to search for his grandfather. At night, before bedtime, his father would recite forbidden poems. Giap recalled one in particular, entitled "The Fall of Hue," which was about the French seizure and sack of the imperial capital in 1883. In 1924, Giap went to study at the lycée in Hue, and his history textbook there told him that what he had learned at home didn't matter. "Our country was called Gaul, and our ancestors were the Gauls," Giap told us, recalling the French textbook. "When you think of the old days, you never forget the shame of having lost your country."

In 1940, when Giap was twenty-nine years old, he was a history teacher at a lycée in Hanoi and a part-time journalist, and he had a substantial police record for nationalist agitation and Communist Party activity. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the French authorities launched a new campaign of repression against the Party, and he had to flee to China. Giap's wife met him beside one of the city's lakes to say goodbye. She brought their infant daughter with her. Giap hadn't dared go home, because of police surveillance. He slept at a hotel that night, and the next morning, avoiding the Hanoi railway station, he jumped onto a train for the border town of Lao Cai. He jumped off the train shortly before it reached Lao Cai, and walked across the border into China. His wife, who was also a Party activist, was arrested by the French and died in prison during the Second World War. (Their infant daughter survived, to become a nuclear physicist.) Giap did not return to Hanoi for five years. When he came back, he was a scholar, a revolutionary, and the commander of a fledgling Vietminh guerrilla army that he had formed under the direction of Ho Chi Minh, the future President of North Vietnam, who returned with him.

"'You, professor of history—why did you become a soldier?' people ask me," Giap said, tilting his head back and smiling. "It was my destiny. It was natural for my whole generation." He laughed when we asked if it was true that he had never had any formal military training, and said that shortly before he left for China a Party superior had told him that the time had come to begin an armed struggle. He went to the main library in Hanoi and looked through an encyclopedia for things military. He found an article describing a grenade, and read about how the grenade was set off by a detonator. "It was very difficult to understand," he said. The encyclopedia entry on the grenade and his familiarity with a shotgun—the one firearm that the colonial authorities permitted Vietnamese to own, for hunting—were his "sole knowledge in the matter of armaments," Giap said. The Japanese controlled Hanoi from March to August of 1945, when the war ended. The Vietminh then took over the city. After the French Army reoccupied Hanoi, in 1946, General Jacques Philippe Leclerc, who had liberated Paris from the Nazis, asked Giap what military school he had attended. Giap laughed once more as he relished his answer: "The military school of the jungle."

Giap continued, "You Americans didn't always come here to fight us." He recalled that when he and Ho Chi Minh first returned from the jungle,

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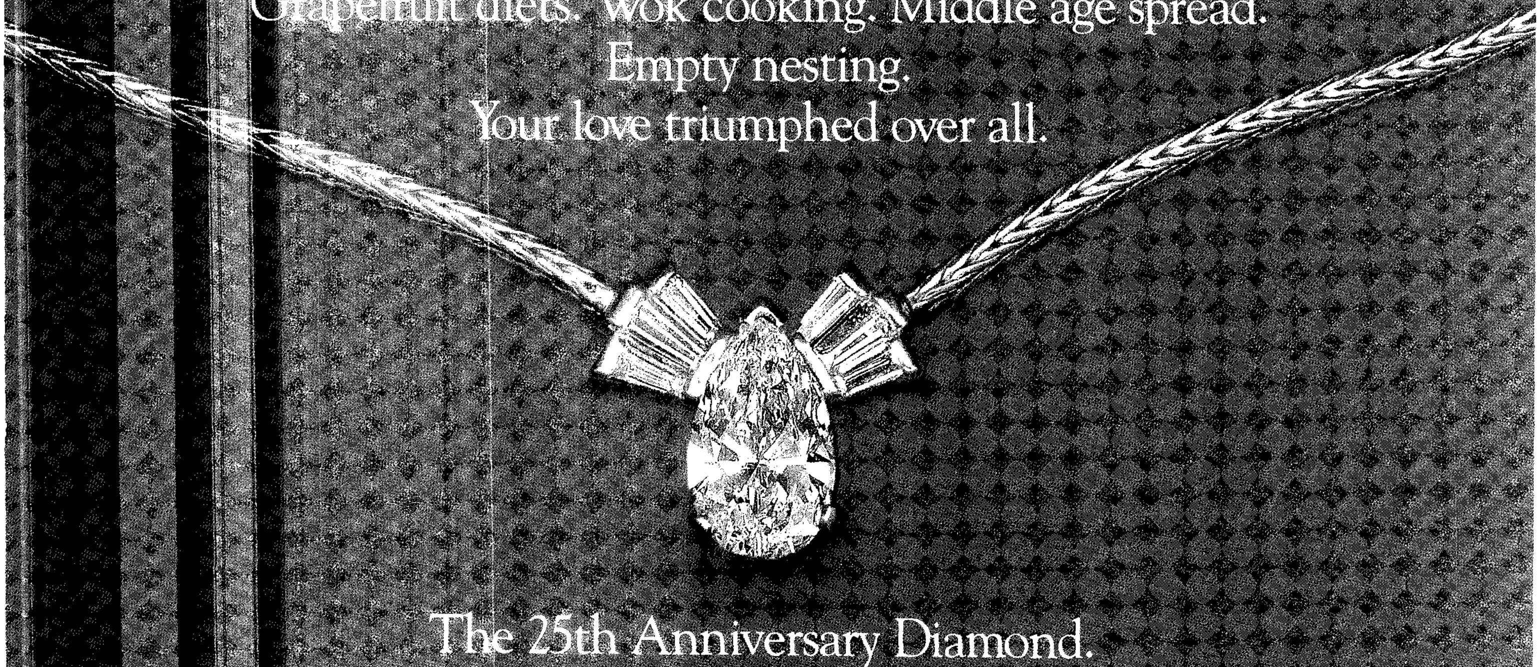

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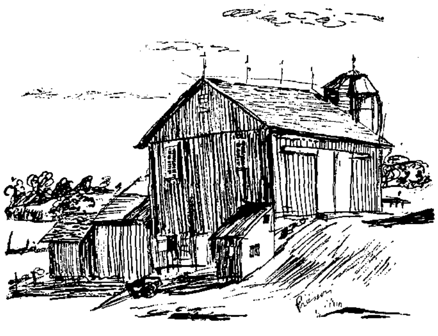
in August of 1945, a detachment from the United States Office of Strategic Services—the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency—with which the Vietminh had been collaborating against the Japanese, was already installed in a hotel in Hanoi. "You asked me if I had antipathy toward Americans," Giap remarked, referring to one of a list of written questions we had been required to submit before the meeting. "How could I have antipathy toward Major Thomas?"—Major Allison Kent Thomas, of the O.S.S. "He was with me at Thai Nguyen when we fought the Japanese."

Ho Chi Minh and Giap remained in Hanoi little more than a year. In December of 1946, the provocations of the returning French forced them into a full-scale war of liberation, and they retreated into the mountains to carry on their fight. They were there until Dien Bien Phu ended the first Vietnamese war for independence and brought them back to Hanoi in triumph. "History isn't a straight line," Giap said. "From here to the jungle, then back here, then back to the jungle, then back here."

In 1982, although Giap had contributed substantially to the defeat of the American forces as well, he was forced out of the Vietnamese Politburo. He had clashed with Le Duan, then General Secretary of the Party, who is blamed for the economic mistakes and political dogmatism that marked the decade following the defeat of the United States. Giap was shrewd enough not to retire from the Army. He thus kept his villa in the best section of Hanoi, where the highest-ranking officials live, and he remained in public life, even though doing so meant the humiliation of standing behind people like the editor of the Party newspaper, *Nhan Dan*, on formal occasions when protocol ruled. Giap's position, Vice-Premier for Science and Technology, is hardly a grand one, but it does give him a role in the process of change that has been gaining momentum in Vietnam since reformers got the upper hand at the Sixth Party Congress, in December of 1986. "Our country is like an ill person who has suffered for a long time," Giap told us. "The countries around us made a lot of progress. We were at war." He spoke of the need for the Vietnamese to alter their way of thinking, and to educate the young in science and technology if the country is to advance, but then he noted that this was not the first call for renewal of the Vietnamese nation, and before taking his leave he quoted a patriotic poem of his youth—"Each day anew, once more each day anew."

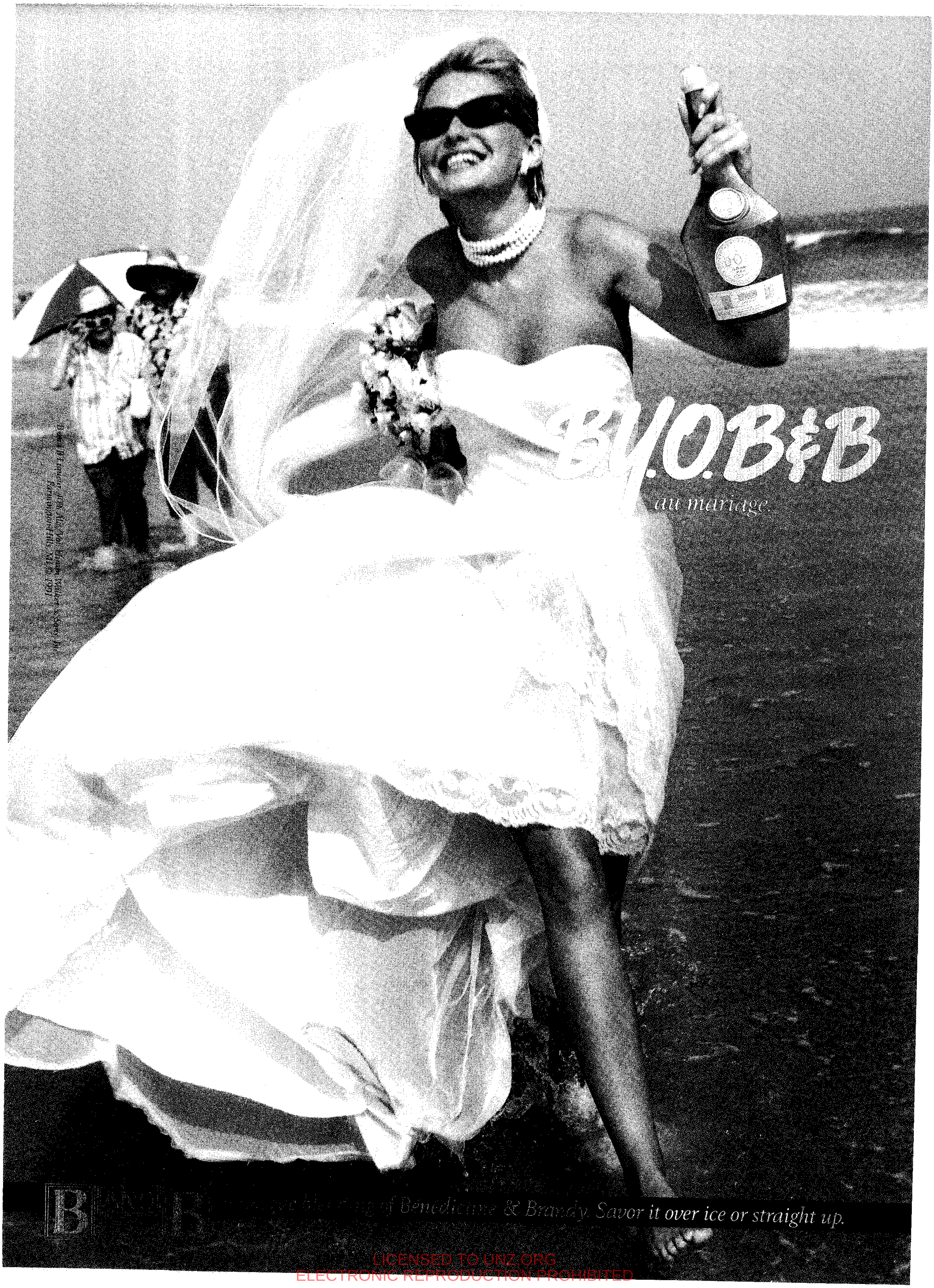
THE process of change that Giap spoke about is called Doi Moi, or "Renovation." The subject dominated almost every conversation we had in either northern or southern Vietnam, because life throughout the country is divided into what happened before Doi Moi and what has happened since. "Drunk with the victory" is the phrase that Vietnamese use to describe the attitude of their senior leadership during the decade after the fall of the American-backed Saigon regime. The period is seen in retrospect as a time of tyranny and waste, a precipitate attempt to create a visionary socialist state in defiance of reality, a folly that compounded the troubles inherited from the war and drove Vietnam into bankruptcy.

The Vietnamese would have had a bad time economically after the American war in any case. South Vietnam, in the period from 1954 to 1975, when it existed as a separate entity, was an artificial society that lived off the United States. The Saigon regime of that era never earned more than a pittance from exports, but it imported hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of consumer products annually, all paid for by Washington. In addition, the United States shipped in millions of tons of free rice, and American military aid was a further source of income, in the form of materials that could be skimmed off and sold. Once the war began in earnest, in 1965, the economy of the North, too, was sustained from the outside—by China, the Soviet Union, and the Eastern European countries—and the population willingly put up with rationing and shortages in order to win.



American aid to the South ceased overnight with the Communist victory in April of 1975, and the area had to exist without it. But much of the countryside in the South had been devastated; land had to be reclaimed and villages rebuilt. In addition, the war had created vast human problems: cities and towns with slums full of refugees; hundreds of thousands of unemployed former soldiers of the South Vietnamese Army; an epidemic of heroin addiction. And, with the American enemy vanquished, the historic animosity between Vietnam as a whole and China reasserted itself: the two governments quarrelled seriously over Chinese support for the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot, in Cambodia, and in the spring of 1978 the Chinese cut off all *their* aid. Not only that, but the Vietnamese were drawn into two more wars that further isolated them: at the end of 1978, unable to tolerate Pol Pot's attacks on their southern border any longer, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia to overthrow him; China retaliated by launching an invasion of Vietnam's northern frontier in February of 1979. The United States thereupon joined China in organizing an economic boycott of Vietnam, and Japan ceased its aid, as did most of the Western European countries. Under American pressure, the international lending institutions—the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund—denied Vietnam reconstruction loans. (There are now signs, however, that Vietnam's troubled international relations might improve. On October 23rd, Vietnam was one of nineteen nations signing the Paris treaty intended to bring peace among the warring factions in Cambodia, and on the same day Secretary of State James Baker announced that the United States might begin talks with Vietnam this month to restore diplomatic relations. And on November 5th China and Vietnam announced that they had agreed to resume normal relations.)

Even with the economic sanctions in effect, the Vietnamese have never said that their economic troubles were principally the fault of outsiders. They do blame Le Duan, who inherited power when President Ho Chi Minh died, in 1969. Le Duan did not inherit Ho Chi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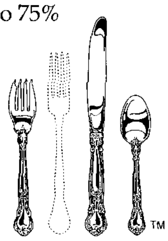

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Minh's wisdom and flexibility, Vietnamese say ruefully. With the country finally united after thirty years of war against the French and the Americans, Le Duan and his comrades of the Old Guard were determined to achieve the socialist state that they had long dreamed of creating in an independent Vietnam.

Vietnam became a self-proclaimed "outpost of socialism in Southeast Asia." Agricultural land in the North had already been collectivized into coöperatives, where the peasants farmed in work brigades, and in 1978 collectivization was extended to the farmland of the South. Capitalism was abolished. All industry was nationalized and run on a rigidly centralized basis by the State Planning Commission, in Hanoi, in imitation of the classic Communist economic model that Stalin developed in the Soviet Union during the nineteen-thirties. Factory managers were told what to make, how much to make, whom to sell their products to, and what prices to charge. They bought raw materials at subsidized prices. (The raw materials were provided by the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites.) Bigness and heavy industry were emphasized rather than the production of consumer goods. A factory manager's salary was based on how many workers he had, not on his factory's efficiency. All a manager had to do to succeed was to meet the annual production target. If his factory ran a deficit, the government absorbed the debt. Happiness for all deserving citizens was what mattered. (The motto of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was, and is, "Independence, Liberty, Happiness.") No one was to go hungry, because everyone could go to a state store and buy a monthly ration of rice at a low, government-subsidized price. Medical care was free.

The rice subsidy alone was enormously expensive. One official estimated that it cost three times as much annually as the war in Cambodia. The state stores provided the monthly rice rations at fifty dong a kilogram, which had been the price of rice in North Vietnam in 1956. Rice on the free market had meanwhile risen to between five hundred and six hundred dong a kilogram. And after collectivization was extended to the South the government found it more difficult to obtain rice, because production fell. The farmers had little incentive to produce: their share of the harvest had been reduced to about twenty per cent, with eighty per cent going to the government in forced rice sales at less than market value—an attempt to hold down the cost of the subsidy—and to the "Red landlords," as the salaried bureaucrats who ran the coöperatives were derisively called by the peasantry. Natural disasters, ranging from typhoons to crop pests, which are particularly troublesome in central Vietnam and the Red River Delta, in the North—perennial rice-deficit areas—worsened the problem. The regime had to resort to spending precious hard currency to import rice from India and other Asian countries.

The machinery and other heavy-industry products that Vietnamese factories turned out were too old-fashioned or too shoddily made to sell abroad for hard currency that might have been used to buy consumer goods. Soviet aid to Vietnam, mainly in materials worth about two billion dollars a year during the nineteen-eighties (it has now virtually ceased), was not consumer-oriented but, rather, geared to large-scale projects like hydroelectric stations. And since many of the Vietnamese factories were mere boondoggles much of the Soviet aid was wasted.

Le Duan and his colleagues thought that they were building socialism, but by 1986, when Le Duan died, the Vietnamese economy was on the verge of collapse, and the Party's ability to govern was called in question. Inflation was running between six hundred and seven hundred per cent a year; the currency was becoming more worthless every day, and the official exchange rate at one point was fifteen hundred dong to the dollar while the black-market rate was five thousand. The stores were bare of consumer items. Vietnamese waited in long lines at the state rice shops for their monthly rations, because storage and transportation systems were breaking down, too; sometimes rice was simply not available. A Russian chemical engineer working for the United Nations flew from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City with a delegation of high-ranking Vietnamese officials that year,

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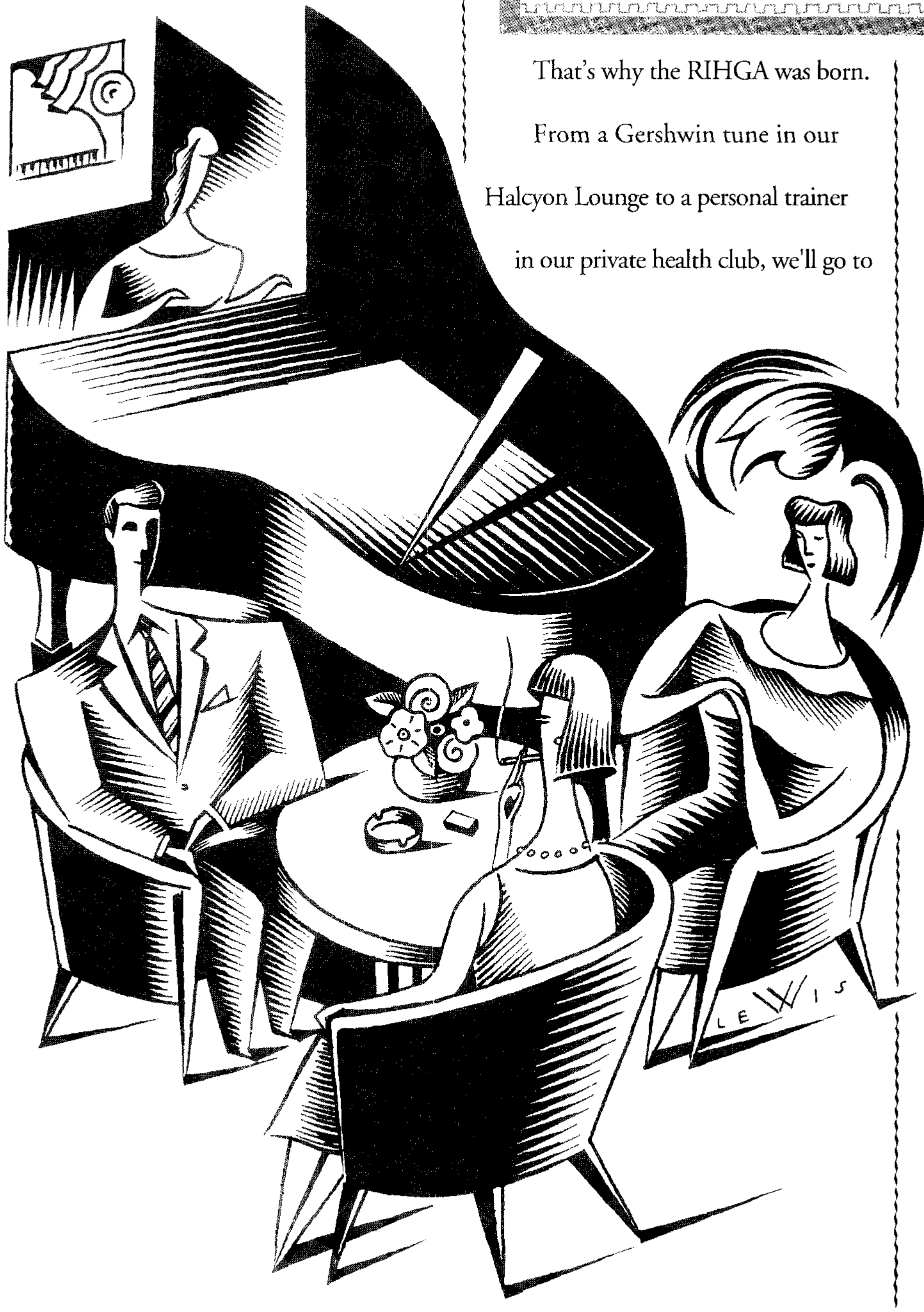

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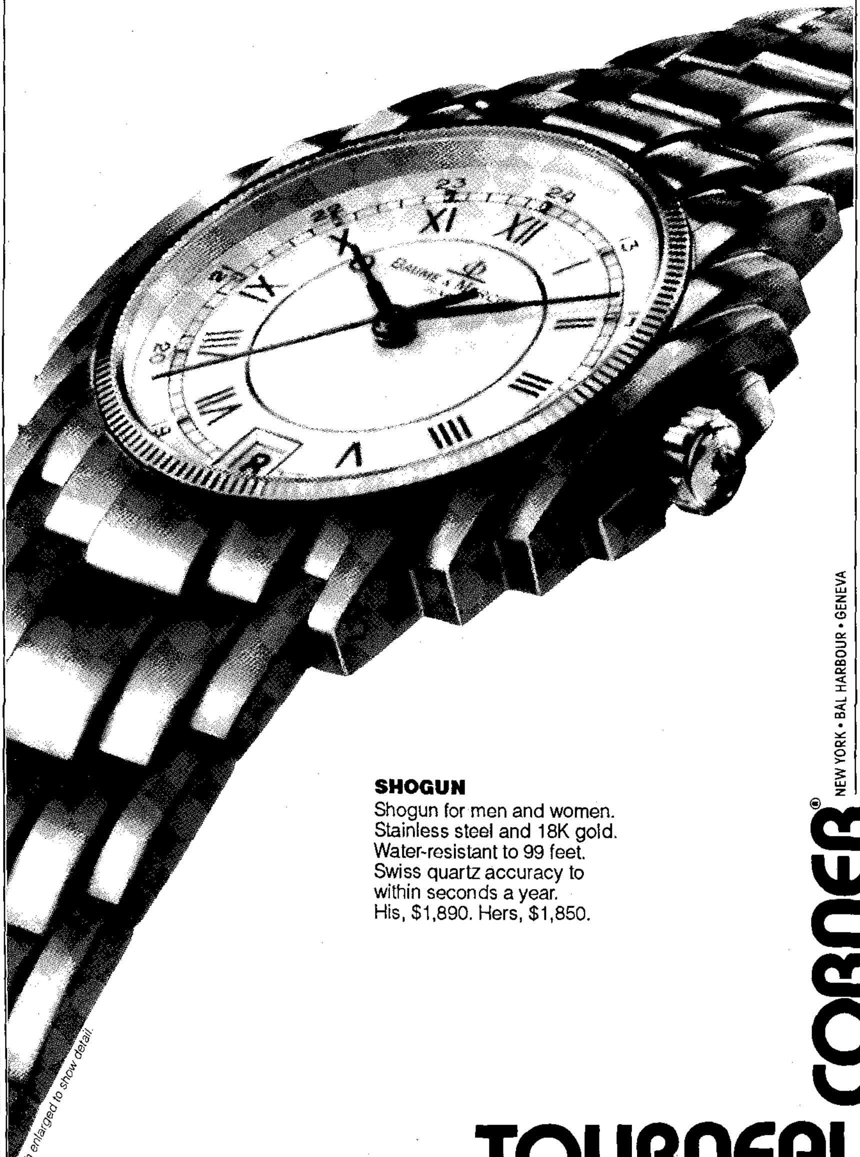

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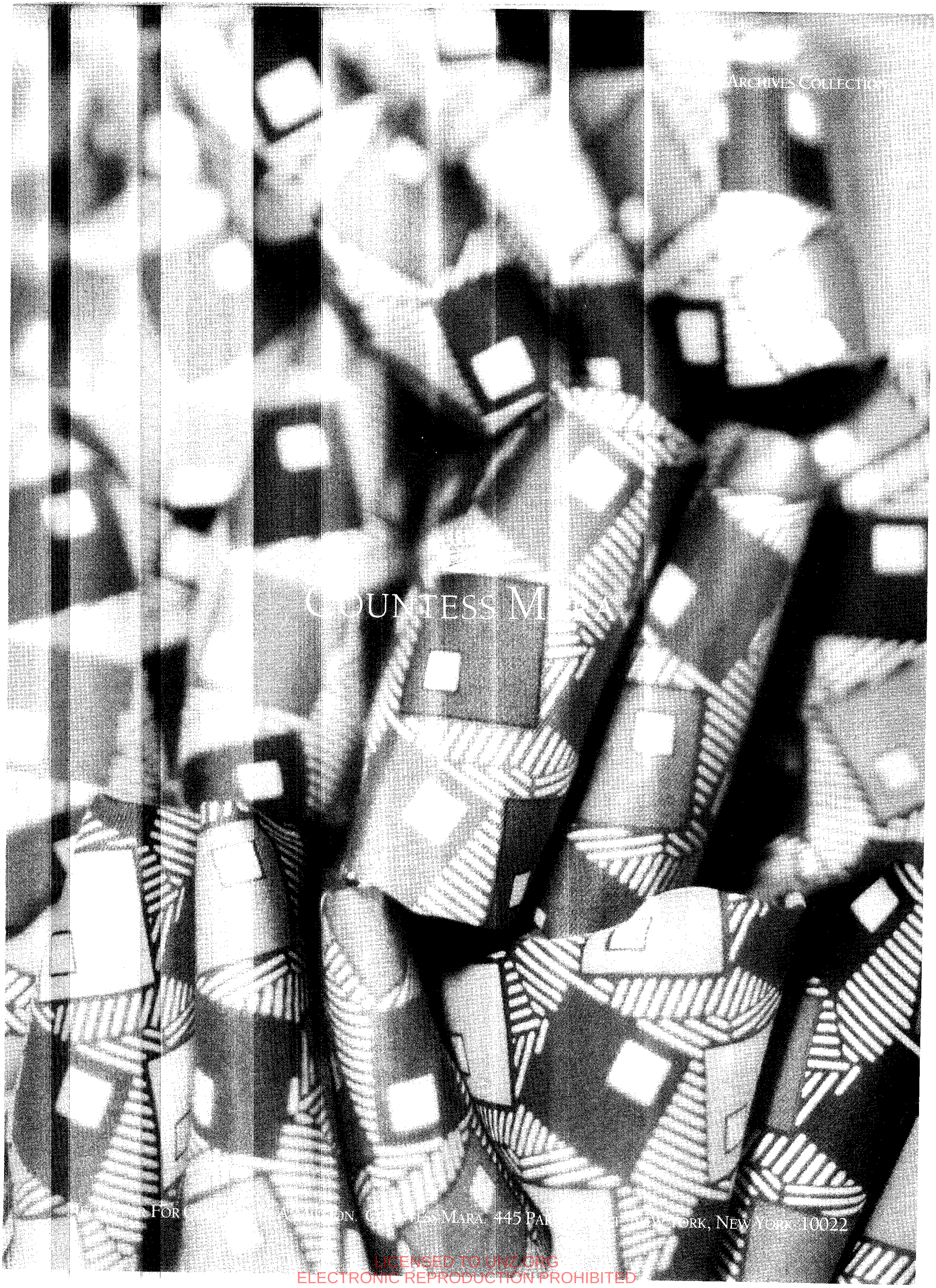
and was astonished to see these officials, all Party members, taking bags of rice back on the return trip, because rice cost five times as much on the free market in Hanoi. Although people were not starving, as they were in Africa, hunger and malnutrition had become chronic in the Red River Delta and in central Vietnam.

At the Sixth Party Congress, the reformers prevailed—just in time. (The Vietnamese Communist Party meets in general conclave about every five years.) Nguyen Van Linh, a Northerner who had spent the entire French and American wars fighting in the South and, like Giap, had been pushed out of the Politburo in 1982 by Le Duan for opposing the headlong rush to socialism, was elected General Secretary of the Party. Doi Moi and the sobering up from the victory binge began. Rationing and subsidized prices for rice and all other commodities were abolished. People were told they would have to buy what they needed in the market. Capitalism was legalized, and private enterprise was encouraged. The currency was freed to find its true value; the artificial exchange rate was ended, and the dong was permitted to float at approximately the black-market rate. In order to counter inflation, the government started shrinking the money supply. The country's borders were opened to trade, and a liberal foreign-investment law was passed to try to attract capital from Western and Asian capitalist nations. Agriculture was decollectivized. Farmers were given back the land under fifteen-year contracts, which were granted in exchange for amounts of rice fixed at the outset—the equivalent of a land tax in a Western country. The rest of the harvest has since belonged to the farmer to sell as he chooses.

Stalin's economic model for industry went the way of collectivization. About forty big industrial projects—a new iron-and-steel center, a tractor factory, a heavy-machinery plant—were abandoned. Emphasis was shifted to the support of agriculture and the production of consumer goods. Centralized planning was drastically curtailed. Factory managers were told that they were on their own—that they would have to decide what to make, find their customers, pay international prices for whatever raw materials they needed, and make a profit or go bankrupt. By the summer of 1989, prices had stabi-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lized, stores were filled with goods, inflation had fallen to thirty-five per cent for the year, rice production was up considerably, and the country was able to export rice in quantity for the first time since the nineteen-thirties. Since 1989, however, the reduction in Soviet aid and an unwillingness by the government to continue shutting down unproductive enterprises have resulted in poor economic growth and an inflation rate of more than a hundred per cent annually. Until the American economic boycott ends, and Vietnam is able to benefit from increased aid and foreign trade, it will remain a poor country.

IN the North, we went to visit Bach Mai Hospital, which President Richard Nixon made the best-known hospital in Vietnam when he attacked Hanoi in the so-called Christmas bombing. The bombing is old news now, of course, and we found that Bach Mai no longer attracts prominent visitors. Dr. Tran Do Trinh, the hospital's deputy director, who is a pleasant-spoken man of fifty-eight, told us he was lying awake in the basement when bombs from a B-52 struck, at 2 A.M. on December 22, 1972. That night, he had been unable to fall asleep because of the reverberation of the bombing and the racket of Vietnamese anti-aircraft batteries. Smaller American fighter-bombers had first come over the city in a preliminary raid, at 9 P.M. The big bombers had arrived after midnight. The explosive force of seven bombs that fell simultaneously on Bach Mai's cardiology department collapsed the floors above into the basement. Eleven people around Dr. Trinh were killed, most of them doctors, medical students, and nurses who were on duty to care for patients being sheltered in the basement. The dermatology department, across a courtyard, was hit harder. Seventeen people died there.

A number of well-known people visited the hospital right after the bombing to commiserate. Even Henry Kissinger, who was then Nixon's special assistant for national-security affairs, came to see the wreckage when he flew to Hanoi after the signing of the Paris Agreement of January, 1973. Dr. Trinh recalled that Kissinger had expressed his regret, and had said that the B-52 had been trying to hit a small airfield, about a kilometre away, that was being

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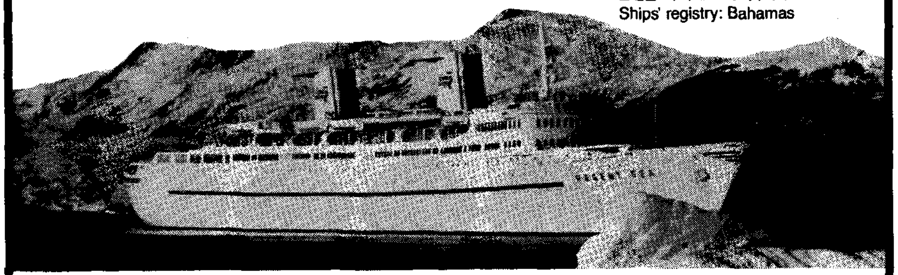

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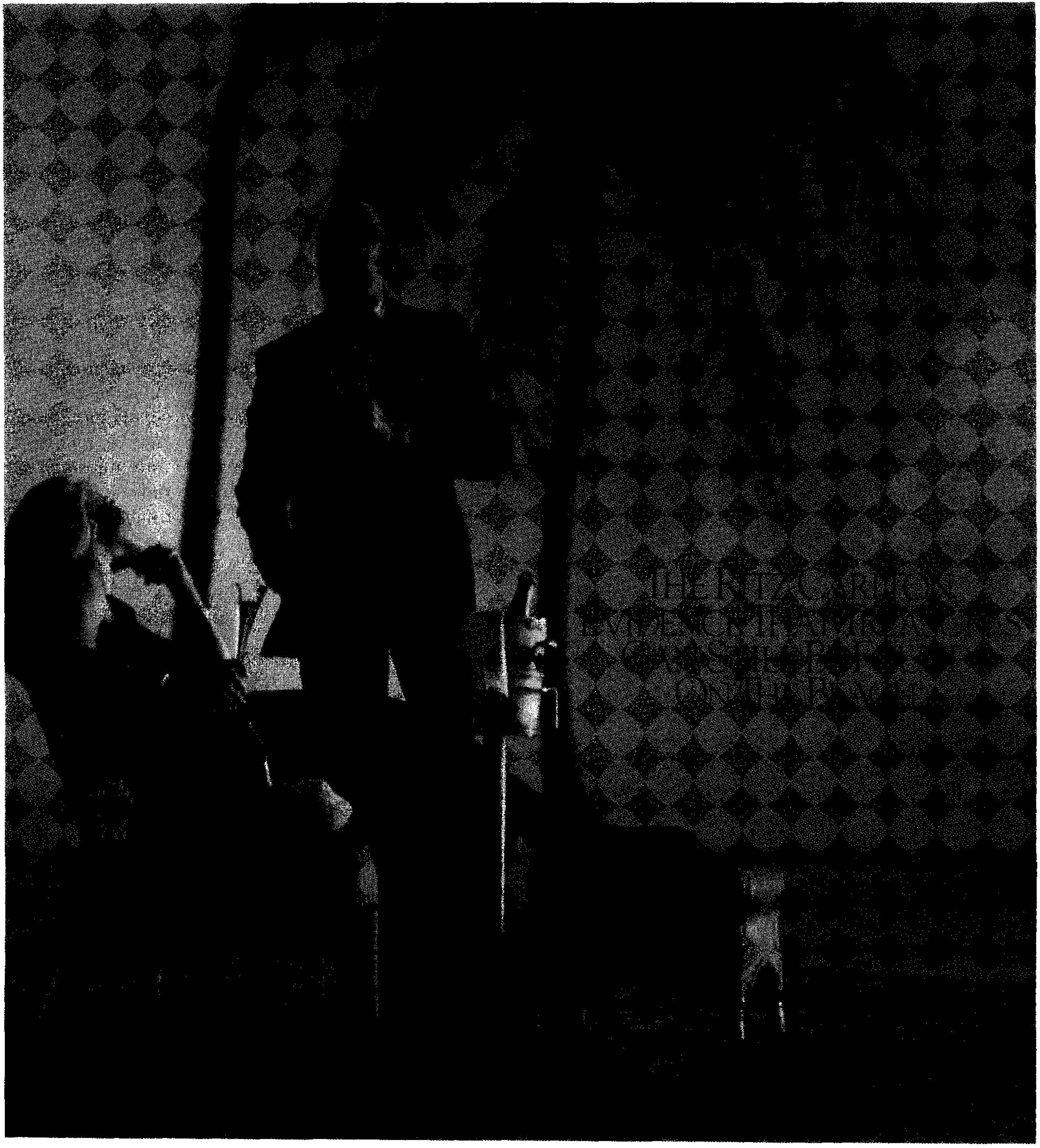

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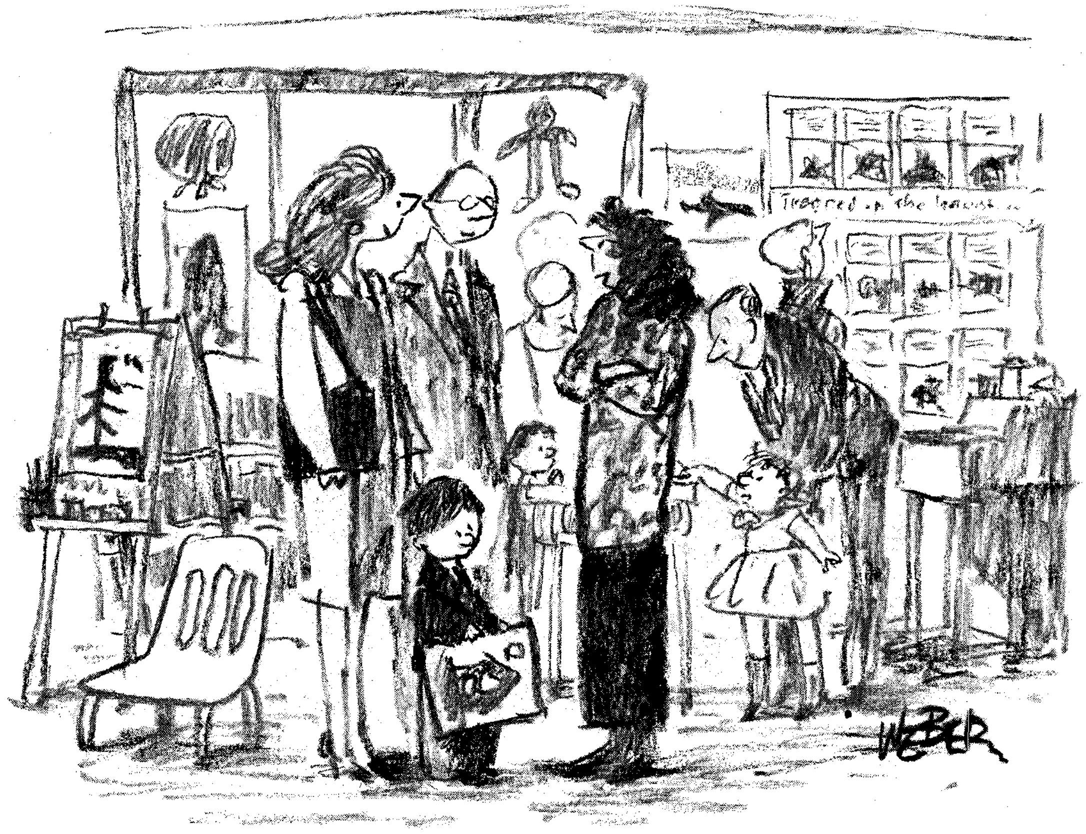

"We teach them that the world can be an unpredictable, dangerous, and sometimes frightening place, while being careful not to spoil their lovely innocence. It's tricky."

used as a helicopter base. After the bombing, an American humanitarian group called Medical Aid for Indo-China gave the cardiology department two hundred thousand dollars' worth of equipment, including Vietnam's first echocardiograph. It had taken two weeks to dig out the dead, and it took eleven years to rebuild the hospital. Bach Mai celebrated the completion with fireworks on December 22, 1983—the eleventh anniversary of the bombing.

Bach Mai, which now has a thousand beds, is the main hospital for northern Vietnam. It is also the principal teaching hospital for Hanoi University, with three hundred and fifty doctors assigned to it, and eight hundred medical students. Dr. Trinh is the second member of his family to serve as its deputy director. His grandfather, a general practitioner, was the assistant to the director, a French doctor, in the nineteen-thirties. Bach Mai was called the René Robin then, after a former governor-general of Indo-China, and Dr. Trinh's grandfather actually ran the hospital, while the French doctor taught on the Hanoi University medical faculty. Dr. Trinh himself is one of Vietnam's eminent cardiologists, a road that led through Dien Bien Phu, where, though he was still a medical student, he performed as a battlefield surgeon.

As Dr. Trinh took us on a tour of Bach Mai, he paid no attention to the hospital's sanitary conditions, because he was used to them. His American visitors were assailed by evidence of what happens when a hospital has little money for maintenance and no antiseptic cleansing materials: grime-covered floors and walls, toilets that reeked, showers that had long ago ceased functioning. The cardiology ward had fifty-five beds but a normal patient load of eighty; three women lay in one bed in the women's section. Dr. Trinh said that the opportunities to improve the hospital had ended when the publicity about the bombing was over. He had not been able to replace any of the equipment he received from Medical Aid for Indo-China in the seventies. The echocardiograph was now an old machine, and no longer functioned properly. Trinh's assistant, a cardiologist named Nguyen Tuyet Minh, who had studied in the Netherlands, pointed to a young patient on a bed. He was a fine scientist, she said, but he had a congenital heart disease. She could save him if she had modern equipment and medications, but she didn't have either and he was going to die.

In the North, we also visited Hai Ba Trung, a postwar hospital that had been built to serve the population of southeast Hanoi. Because both funds and materials were in short supply, it had taken ten years to complete, and had finally opened in 1984. The hospital and its director, Dr. Nguyen Van Xang, epitomized the hope and the sadness of health care in Vietnam. The country has no lack of doctors in the cities and the larger towns, where living conditions are attractive for professionals. Vietnam graduates about two thousand doctors a year from seven medical schools, the principal ones being in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. By and large, medical education in Vietnam is considered good, but a lack of medications and adequate equipment makes the practice of medicine daunting. Still, Dr. Xang did not permit himself or a hundred and fifty physicians who worked under him at Hai Ba Trung to get discouraged. "You have to scrounge for that," he said, in French, when he mentioned one of the scarce antibiotics he needed to treat tuberculosis.

The hospital had six hundred beds, and under Dr. Xang's direction it concentrated on infectious diseases, internal medicine, and plastic surgery to repair birth defects and burns from accidents. He had made it a teaching hospital as well, because he was also deputy chief of the Department of

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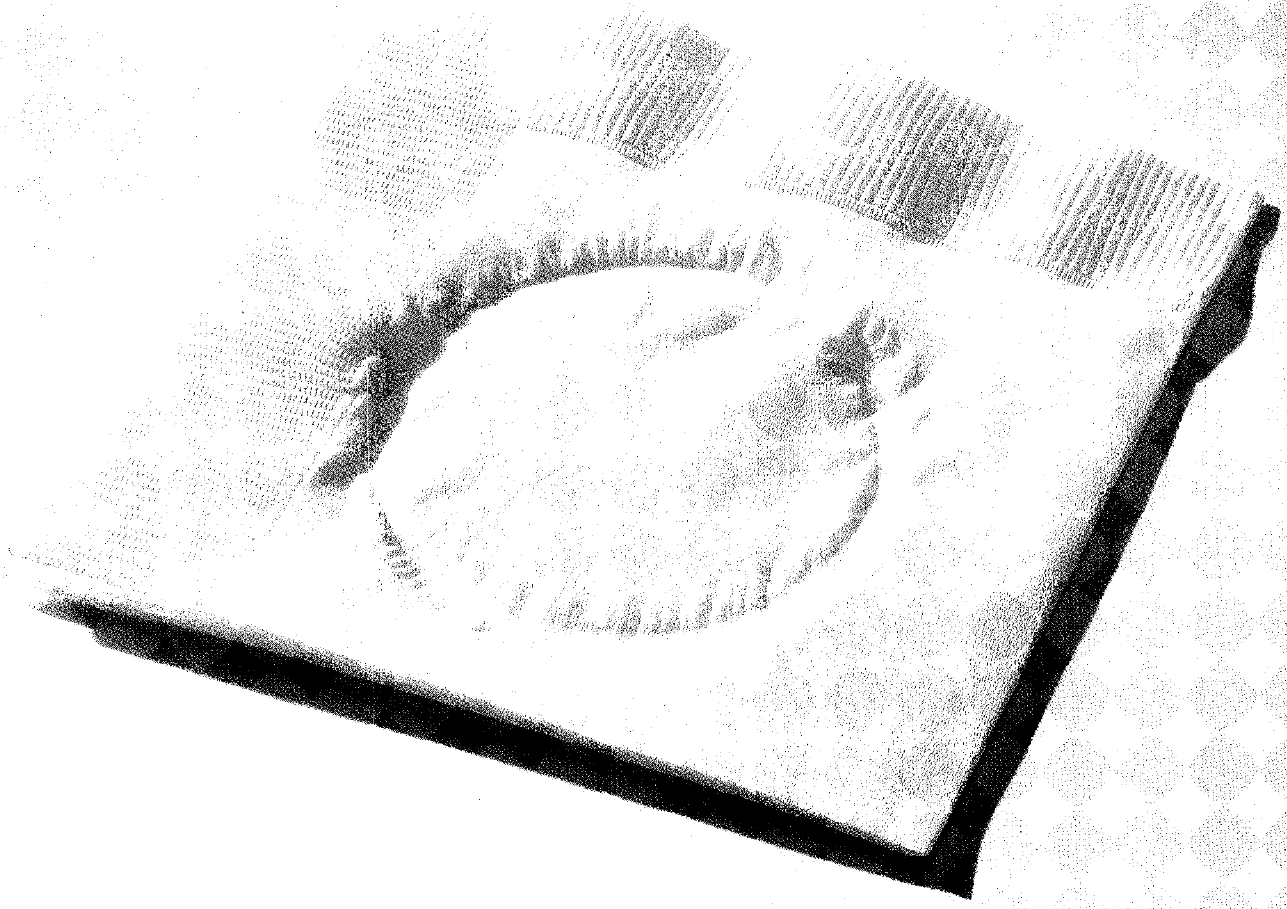

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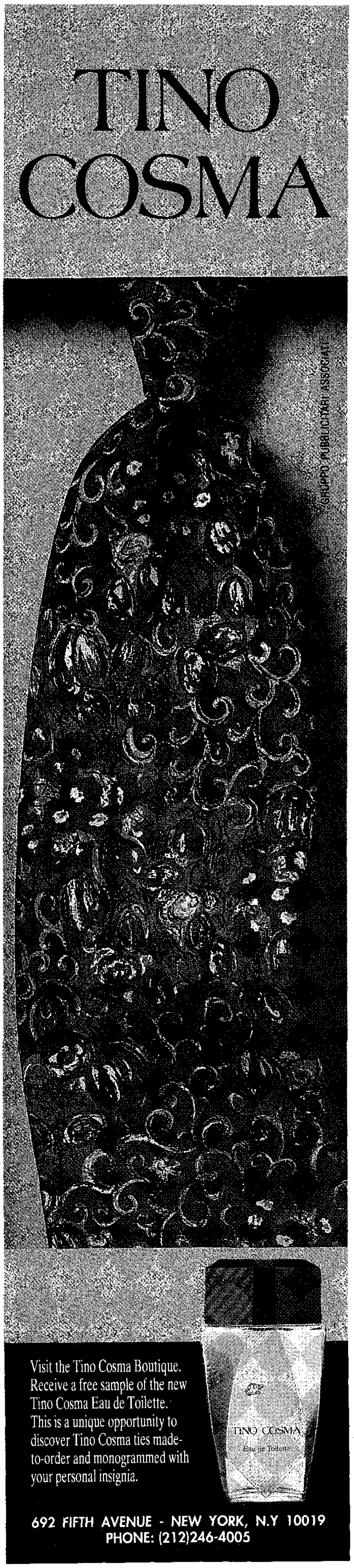
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Surgery at the Hanoi University medical school. "We lost a lot of time on the war—we're a little old," he said. "We're trying to help the sick and to train young M.D.s. In our country, it's the young who count."

If fleetness is a virtue of youth, it was one that Dr. Xang had not lost during his fifty-nine years. A slim man in white coat and cap, with gray hair that he had let grow long over his ears and down his neck, he was light on his feet, plastic sandals flying, as he guided visitors around his hospital. One of the first stops on the tour was at three secondhand dialysis machines, which Dr. Xang had brought back from the Netherlands at the beginning of 1989, after studying kidney disease for six months at a Catholic university there. The Dutch hospital connected with the university had been in the process of replacing its machines, and had let him have these. "They're good machines," he said. He told us that he wanted to use them to create a kidney-dialysis center for the North. "I can easily manage the technique—*my young* colleagues, too," he said. One problem the hospital faced, though, was acquiring enough disposable supplies to run the machines. A Dutch professor he worked with had given him twenty filters. He had used up eight, and was hoarding the remaining twelve for the most urgent cases. Dr. Xang also needed solution. To import a single filter cost the equivalent of ten dollars in foreign currency, which he did not have.

So it went through the rest of the hospital: the work always a hodgepodge of use your imagination, make do with what you have, and be grateful for what you've been given. One of Dr. Xang's sterilizers—also a gift—was of reasonably modern German vintage, while a second was an old metal box from the French days which had been modified for electricity. The thermostats on top were broken. "You need experience to use it," Dr. Xang said. A small microscope to examine urine specimens dated literally from the nineteenth century. "You would have left it in a museum, but we can see a little better than with our eyes," he noted with a smile.

A triumph of the imagination was on display in the second-floor laboratory of the hospital's microbiologist, Le Van Phung. A cheerful man of thirty-six, Dr. Phung was a former student of Dr. Xang's and had recently returned from a three-month interneship in Japan. His work was critical to the hospital. He grew cultures from specimens provided by patients with infectious diseases, and tested antibiotics against the cultures, enabling Dr. Xang and the other physicians to use available medications with maximum effectiveness. Dr. Phung had needed a crucial tool—a centrifuge—and he proudly displayed what he referred to as the Le Van Phung mixer: the motor and the drive shaft had once been part of a little Vietnamese fan. The electric lights over Dr. Phung's laboratory table were too weak for him to study his cultures adequately, and on clear days he carried culture and microscope over to a window.

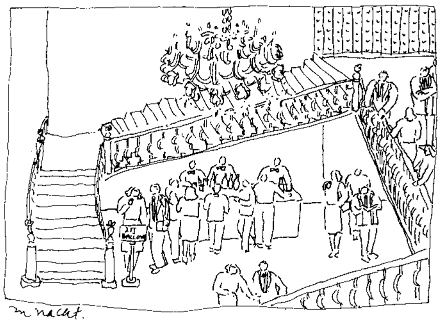
As the tour continued, we came to two rooms that were air-conditioned—to preserve equipment, not to make patients comfortable. One room held an ultrasound device that was used in the treatment of tumors and liver ailments, the other a Japanese machine for taking electroencephalograms, which monitor the electrical activity of the brain. The air-conditioners were mounted in the walls behind cage-type bars, to discourage thieves. A refrigerator in the blood bank was kept locked, because it contained eggs, bread, and milk for small meals that were given as rewards to donors. Recruiting donors was difficult in Vietnam, Dr. Xang said, and he wished that he had the means of testing blood for AIDS, though so far there was thought to be little of the disease in the country. The greatest danger from a blood transfusion was hepatitis B, which infects perhaps fifteen per cent of the population.

The last stop was the intensive-care ward, a single large room where making do ended. Even though a charwoman was mopping the concrete floor, the place was as unsanitary and foul-smelling as the rest of the hospital, because Hai Ba Trung was also typical in having scant funds for maintenance and no antiseptic cleansing materials. There were six patients in the intensive-care ward—two children and four adults, some of whom had infectious diseases—and they all lay close together on beds with straw mats; there were no sheets and no mattresses. Family members stood around to perform the nursing chores and to comfort the patients. One of the patients was a young man whose kidneys were failing. Dr. Xang was going to perform dialysis on the patient that evening, and had prepared a solution to use in the process, but because it lacked an essential ingredient he was not certain it would work. The smallest patient in the room was a fourteen-month-old girl, feverish and asleep. Her parents sat on a bench beside her cot. Dr. Xang explained that the child had an infection of the bloodstream, and to save her he needed a cephalosporin-type antibiotic. (One is commonly sold in the United States under the brand name Keflex.) We offered to pay for it. "You can't buy it in Hanoi," he said.

In the car afterward, our guide-interpreter Duong Quang Thang said that when his wife gave birth to their son there had been two women to a bed and three infants to a cot. He had had to take two weeks off work—a normal practice for Vietnamese husbands when their wives give birth—to take food to her three times a day, and also changes of clothing, and water for drinking and washing. The hospitals do have kitchens, he said, but no one would want to eat the food they provide. What was most striking about his story was that position and salary mattered little when it came to health care. Thang, thirty years old, was a middle-level civil servant with a good income, and his wife was also a professional. In the hope that free enterprise might improve health care, the reformers got two laws through the National Assembly while we were in Hanoi. One authorized hospitals to charge patients for services and medications if they could afford to pay. Another gave doctors the right to set up private practices after normal working hours and to operate private clinics. Although the laws were clearly going to bring about further privatizing of medicine, to some extent they were legalizing existing conditions. Dr. Xang had explained to us that families with means were already being asked to buy medications from pharmacies, so that the hospital could save the limited amount it had for the neediest.

There is no quick solution to the fundamental health problems of the country. The turmoil following the American war and the embargo initially imposed by the United States after the collapse of the Saigon regime, and then extended and tightened with Chinese collaboration after the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, delayed a UNICEF-sponsored campaign to vaccinate all children against measles, tuberculosis, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus, and polio. The campaign was now making good progress, but the Vietnamese did not expect to eradicate polio until the year 2005. A second campaign, this one sponsored by the United Nations World Health Organization, was being waged against another major killer of children—diarrhea. Mothers in the villages were being taught to stop the dehydration that brings death, by the simple method of administering oral rehydration salts—a sachet of dextrose, glucose, salt, and potassium chloride dissolved in boiled water. The strategy behind both campaigns—to use limited resources in a way that would benefit the greatest number—was intelligent but could offer no protection against diseases that are more costly to eradicate.

Before we left for Vietnam, we had been advised by a tropical-medicine specialist, Dr. Martin Wolfe, to get a shot for Japanese encephalitis when we reached Bangkok, and to take enough vaccine along to Hanoi for a second shot, to complete the immunization, two weeks later. (Because the Japanese manufacturer feared lawsuits from litigation-prone Americans, the vaccine was available in the United States only to military personnel and to civilian officials working with the military.) "You'll see cases of Japanese encephalitis when you get to Hanoi," Dr. Wolfe said. We asked how we would recognize them. "They will probably be children," he said. "They'll be asleep and they won't wake up." He explained that epidemics of the disease, which is mosquito-borne and inflames the brain, strike Hanoi and the Red River Delta during the hot months, and that the victims are usually children because children have not yet built up resistance to disease, as adults have from dengue and lesser fevers. There is no cure for Japanese encephalitis, he added, and those who survive are often incapacitated. Dr. Wolfe was right. We saw two victims in one hospital—a baby boy in a deep coma and a boy of twelve, also asleep, his father, a doctor, standing distraught beside his bed.



Importing vaccine to protect its children against Japanese encephalitis would cost Vietnam two dollars for each immunization, and would use up the entire national-health budget. Vaccine for hepatitis B is also beyond the country's means. Dr. Judith Ladinsky, who teaches preventive medicine at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and heads a humanitarian organization called the U. S. Committee for Scientific Coöperation with Vietnam, is trying to help the Vietnamese get around the expense of importation by teaching them how to develop and manufacture vaccines themselves. The road from laboratory to working vaccination programs, however, will take years. And there is no vaccine against the blindness that results from a deficiency of Vitamin A. It comes from the malnutrition of poverty. The blindness is irreversible if it is not caught in time, and it is frequent among ragged village children, many with skin sores, whom we saw in the Red River Delta.

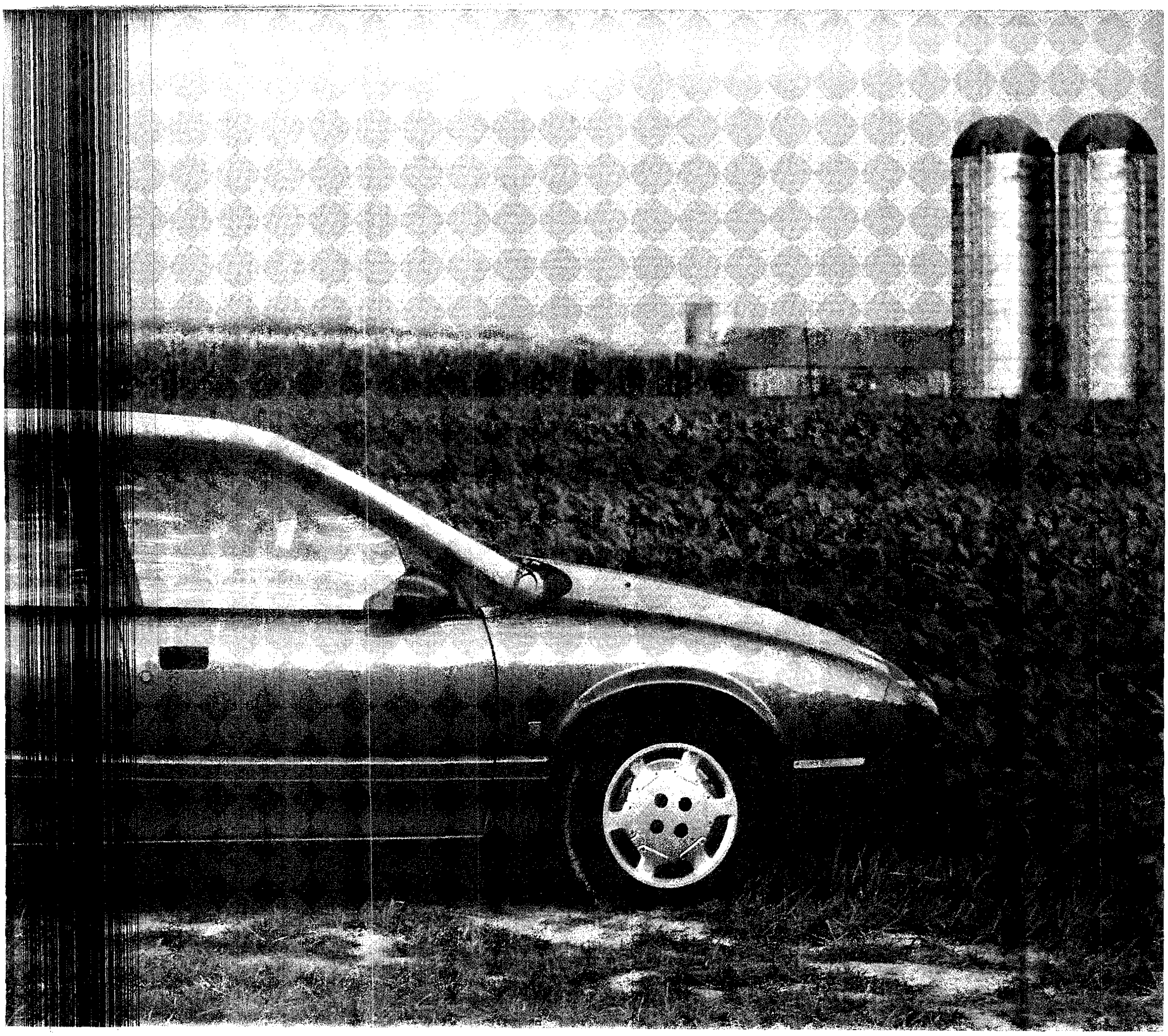
As part of an agreement with the United States in 1987 to search for the remains of American war dead, the Vietnamese were told they would get humanitarian help from private American organizations—nongovernmental organizations, or N.G.O.s, in the parlance of international aid. (There continues to be no credible evidence to support the theory that Vietnam is still holding American prisoners.) The help that has come—some prosthetic devices, some antibiotics, occasional trips by surgical teams—is a token, given the country's enormous needs. Only large-scale governmental aid from the Western countries and Japan, which the American-Chinese embargo has prevented, could make a difference. Sweden, one of the two European countries that have ignored the em-

JOHN HOLTKAMP was spending more on gas than on film, which posed a problem for him.

John's a photographer. And he used to drive a truck. That big box he's leaning on is his bread and butter, and he takes it (and more) wherever the work happens to be. Which, on the average, means 750 miles from Monday morning to Friday night.

Hoping to pay less for those miles, John shopped the small imports. But they just wouldn't do. Then he heard about us. So he came by, with all his stuff, and looked at a Saturn sedan.

©1991 Saturn Corporation. EPA-estimated MPG for the SL1 automatic is 26 city/35 highway. John Holtkamp is pictured with a 1992 Saturn SL1.



(Our [illegible] trucks, while a real mouthful to say, [illegible] you have more than a trunkful to haul.)

On [illegible] weekends John hauls animal feed. Because the Holtkamps have a llama, eight miniature donkeys, and an emu.

Since we didn't know what an emu was either, we asked, before meeting, if he wouldn't mind holding his emu while we took a picture of him and his Saturn. "Well," John said, "it's okay with me, but emus don't really like that sort of thing."

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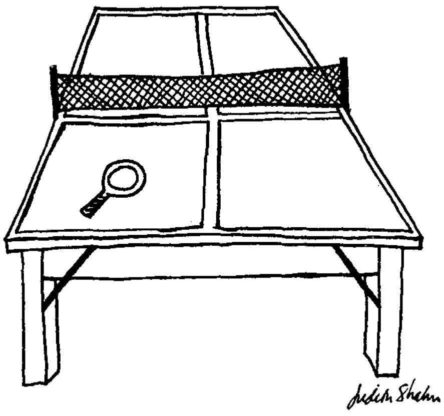
bargo (the other is Finland), has provided the sole source of significant medical aid to Vietnam, about eight million dollars a year. The Vietnam-Sweden Children's Hospital, built between 1975 and 1980 in a Hanoi suburb, was the single adequately equipped and supplied hospital we saw in the whole country. It had four hundred beds, five modern operating rooms, incubators, and an ample quantity of medications. Although the Vietnamese were in charge, the Swedes had wisely followed up the building and equipping of the hospital with assistance in running it. A Swedish doctor, a Swedish nursing supervisor, and Swedish technicians worked with its director—Nguyen Thi Nhan, a Vietnamese pediatrician—and her staff. The hospital was also the only one we visited in Vietnam that was clean.

JUST as the Red River Delta, where the poverty of the North is so conspicuous, has become one of the most densely populated rural environments in Asia, so Hanoi has become one of Asia's most crowded urban environments. In the central part of the city, the population density runs to about thirteen hundred persons per hectare, or thirty-two hundred and fifty people per acre—one of the highest densities on earth. Some of the worst crowding occurs in the ancient part of Hanoi, where thirty-six picturesque streets, so narrow that they are actually lanes, are knit together into a section just above the city's most famous lake, the Lake of the Restored Sword. Many of the buildings there are of one or two stories and are hundreds of years old. Since plumbing is virtually nonexistent in them, a nightly ritual is to take the children down to the sidewalk to urinate before bedtime. The number of Vietnamese packed into once-spacious villas in the former European sections can be astonishing. In the late nineteen-eighties, the Australian Embassy, which was in need of more room for its staff, leased two adjacent two-story buildings from the Hanoi city government. When the Vietnamese residents were evicted so that the buildings could be refurbished, the Australians discovered to their dismay that a hundred and twenty-seven Vietnamese had been living in just one of the houses.

In principle—according to government regulation, that is—everyone in the city is entitled to four square metres of living space, or forty-three square feet. Married couples are officially entitled to nine square metres, with more space supposedly allotted as children come along. But in fact when young people marry they normally move in with the wife's or the husband's family, whichever is more willing to take them, and then pack the children in as they appear. Parents have resigned themselves to the situation, giving up more space as each child marries and as grandchildren are born. There is a quid pro quo. The Confucian ethic and Vietnamese tradition say that children should look after parents when they grow old, and the only real social security that anyone has in present-day Vietnam is the family. The advantage that both the Confucian ethic and the housing shortage provide for young married people is live-in babysitters for the next generation: a sight almost as common as a grandmother bathing a child in a tin tub at curbside (the crowding means that much of life has to be lived outdoors) is that of a grandfather sitting in a canvas chair on a sidewalk on a stifling evening cooling a baby in his lap with a hand fan. Where bathrooms and kitchens are available, they are usually communal affairs, with the four or five families involved drawing up schedules.

Not surprisingly, the most common civil dispute in Hanoi concerns housing. "There is a housing war in Vietnam," a prominent newspaper editor told us when we talked to him. The ruckus typically starts when one family tries to build a kitchen of its own, or walls off part of a house or apartment, inconveniencing others. Because of corruption in local government, if the dispute is taken to the district people's committee it is usually settled in favor of the side that pays more. An appeal to higher authority normally does not alter the outcome: the Hanoi People's Committee will tell the district committee to "look into this matter," and the district committee will reply that it already has. Persistence may result in the city government's sending an investigator, but his efforts frequently do not bring justice, either. Some housing disputes become so heated that the losing parties appeal all the way to the National Assembly.



The government's proposed remedy for the housing crush—building new apartment blocks in the suburbs—has so far proved ineffective. The authorities lack funds to build enough housing to approach demand, which keeps rising as the population does, and, besides, the new buildings deteriorate rapidly. Just how rapidly is apparent from a local custom of dating a building by putting the year it was finished above the entrance or under the rooftop. Buildings dated 1985 look as if someone had misdated them by a decade or two. Shoddy construction plays to a climate—temperature fluctuations from the high nineties in summer to the low forties in winter, with perpetual high humidity and frequent rains—that would be hard on any materials. The apartment blocks are of concrete slabs put up Soviet style, in monotonous rows, and the concrete is commonly too soft to withstand the elements. Cement is the hardening agent in concrete, and workers and officials in charge of the construction organizations steal as much cement as they can to sell on the free market. A new bridge erected at the port of Haiphong collapsed because thirty to forty per cent of the cement that was supposed to go into the concrete had been pilfered.

At the time of our visit, Finland was trying to ameliorate the lives of Hanoians by helping the city build a new water-supply system, to replace the decrepit French-built one. Stacks of big concrete-lined cast-iron water pipes awaiting installation were a sign to passersby that Finland cared. Because of cracked pipes and loose joints, pressure in the old French system was so low that hundreds of thousands of people were having to collect their water in buckets from shallow sidewalk wells they had created by punching holes in the underground pipes

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and running taps off them. Some of the wells were individual sidewalk bomb shelters left over from the American war. The wells and the general water-supply system were both severely contaminated whenever there was flooding from heavy rains or a typhoon. Polluted surface water surged first into the wells and then into the water-supply system through the holes cut in the pipes for the taps. The sewer system left behind by the French worsened the pollution; the colonizers had built a sewer system for only their part of the city, ignoring the sections where the Vietnamese lived. Modern cities separate sanitary sewers from storm drains that carry off rainwater. The French-colonial system runs both into the same set of pipes, and the pipes empty into the city's lakes and the Red River. When the drains are overwhelmed by flooding, the sewage has nowhere to go but back into the city.

FOR the first time since the French seized control of the city, in 1861, what used to be Saigon and is now Ho Chi Minh City is becoming a truly Vietnamese place. The Vietnamese are gradually putting to their own use what the French and the Americans built and left behind, and the process of reclamation sometimes has a way of submerging the past. During the war, everyone knew the location of the grand emporium of American civilization—the main PX, in Cholon, which was the Chinese section of the city. Now, even though we had spent considerable time in South Vietnam in the nineteen-sixties, we needed to have an elderly Chinese businessman who remembered draw a sketch of the intersection where the PX stood, and we still had trouble finding it; numerous people on nearby streets had no recollection of it. We finally discovered the site by looking over the gate of an abandoned compound, and we saw that the Vietnamese had turned it into a dump for scrap metal to sell to dealers from other Southeast Asian countries. The yard in front was filled with the carcasses of trucks and other cast-off military vehicles, piles of worn-out tires, and rusted shipping containers with "U.S. Army" still visible in white on weathered green paint. The buildings behind, which had once been whitewashed stucco and had dispensed Scotch whiskey and filter-tipped cigarettes, hi-fis and television sets, room

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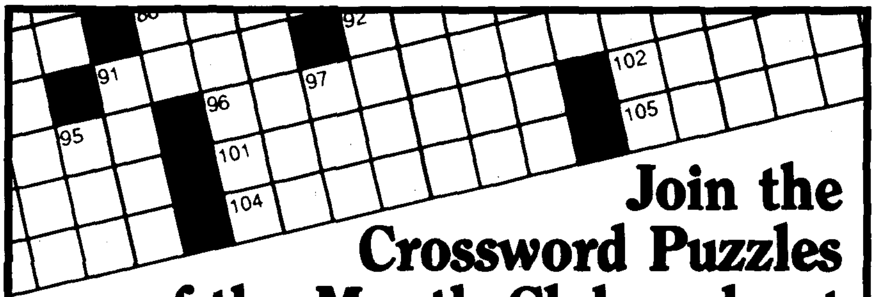
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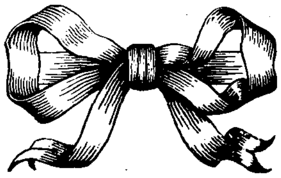
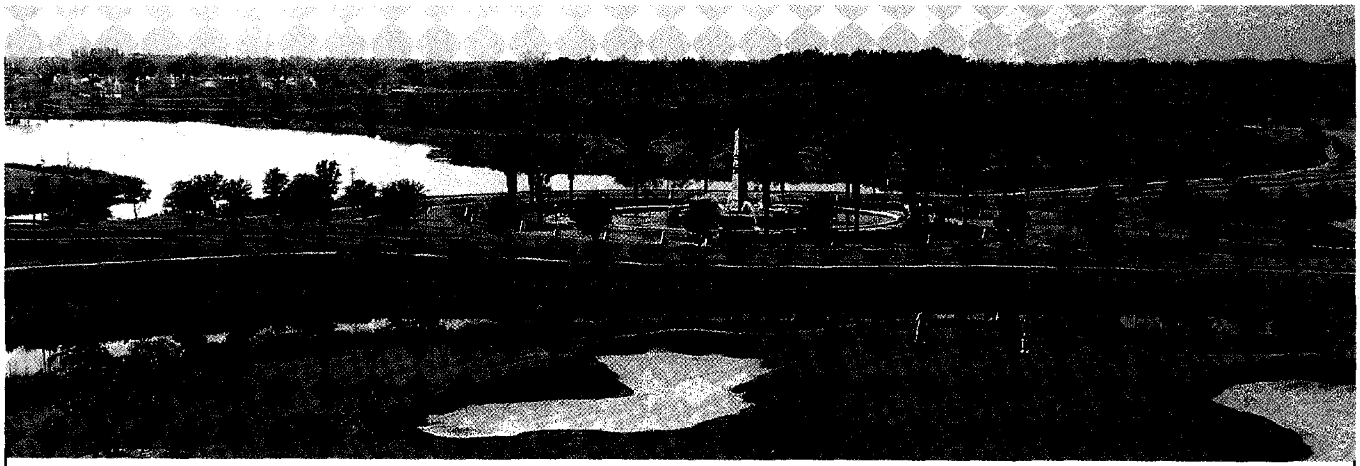


air-conditioners, and lipstick and hair spray, were abandoned, and gray with moss.

When we paid a visit to the Ho Chi Minh City Arts and Literature Association, however, the past suddenly emerged in dramatic fashion. Vien Phuong, the association's vice-chairman, who is a writer of short stories, told us that the association's headquarters had previously belonged to the mother-in-law of General Nguyen Van Thieu, the last American-supported President of South Vietnam, and asked if we would like to see a safe in which he had found two million Saigon-government piastres. After the house was seized, in 1975, he had discovered the safe in a bedroom, and had sent for a welder to cut it open with an acetylene torch. Phuong said that he had used the cash to support fellow-writers during the months immediately after the fall of Saigon, because the former government's currency, although worthless outside the country, remained legal tender with considerable purchasing power for quite a while. There were five more safes in the house, but he had found them already opened and cleaned out. In the panic at the end, one safe had been dragged to a stairway landing, and was still standing there—a symbol of a society so corrupt that it had finally collapsed of its own moral emptiness.

The Vietnamese gave the best-known foreign residence in the city—that of the former American Ambassador—to their Soviet benefactors. The Soviet consul-general now slept in the two-story villa where Ellsworth Bunker, the longest-serving American Ambassador in Saigon, lived from 1967 to 1973. The consul-general had not taken the trouble to remove the accoutrements of the past: there was still a spiked grille along the top of the compound's front wall; there were floodlights; and, at one corner, there was a reinforced-concrete tower where Marine guards in battle gear had crouched when the Vietcong attempted a surprise attack through the old Mac Dinh Chi Cemetery, at the end of the street. The tombstones the guerrillas hid behind are gone, because of a postwar policy to turn urban cemeteries into parks. The two most famous occupants of the cemetery had been Ngo Dinh Diem, the Catholic mandarin installed in power by the United States in 1954 and then assassinated in an American-sponsored coup in 1963, after he became a liability, and his brother and virtual co-ruler, Ngo Dinh Nhu, who was assassinated with him. Their remains were not claimed by relatives, so they were cremated and placed, with other unclaimed remains, in a mausoleum north of the city. Now, weekend nights, rock bands play on an open-air stage in the park where the cemetery used to be. There is an outdoor coffee shop. A park guard in a blue uniform blew a whistle at two young people riding a bicycle along a shrub-lined walk intended only for pedestrians.

The house that General William C. Westmoreland lived in when he was commander of the American forces in Vietnam has had a less fortunate postwar fate. The Ho Chi Minh City branch of the Vietnamese Women's Federation now occupies it, and has done nothing to keep the place up. A traditional colonial mansion in ochre with white trim and louvered green shutters, it had been elegant—particu-



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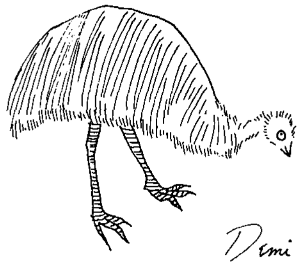
larly during the early nineteen-sixties, in the time of Westmoreland's predecessor as commander, General Paul Harkins, when the war was a countryside affair that did not seem to threaten the city. An Army sergeant in starched khakis had greeted visitors under a covered doorway off a circular drive; he was the butler. The Vietnamese servants wore white uniforms. Now a sign on the street outside, in front of a cage where a sentry stood, advertises bus tours to the seaside resort of Vung Tau and to Da Lat, in the mountains—an enterprise launched by the Women's Federation to raise money. Four tour buses were parked inside a walled yard where jeeps and staff cars and General Westmoreland's black Chrysler Imperial had come and gone. Radio aerials were still to be seen on the red tile roof.

Other former American buildings are being kept under official or semi-official Vietnamese ownership, so that they can be vacated easily when Washington agrees to end its economic embargo and establish diplomatic relations. In Hanoi, a villa that had been the American consulate during the French years serves as a headquarters for the Fatherland Front—the government-controlled political and civic organization to encourage national unity—while awaiting possible conversion into the first American Embassy in Vietnam's national capital. The fortresslike seven-story building (with a helicopter pad on the roof) that had been the American Embassy in Saigon is closed, so that it can be reopened as the first American consulate in Ho Chi Minh City. The consulate will need more office space than the Embassy in Hanoi, because it will handle the concerns of the largest Vietnamese community overseas—the Vietnamese living in the United States, who now number about seven hundred thousand, and whose numbers are constantly growing. Virtually all are from the South—principally from the Saigon area—and have relatives in Vietnam. Since the reformers within the Party gained the upper hand, thousands have begun to return each year for family visits to celebrate Tet, the lunar New Year holiday, and to look for business opportunities.



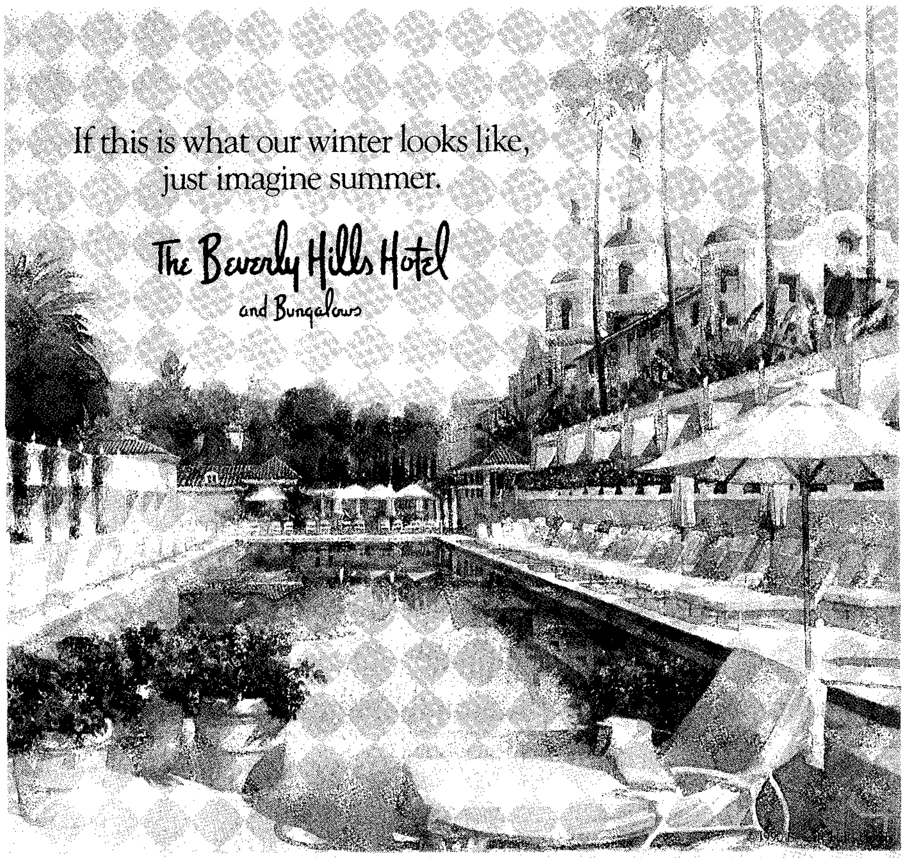
The property of the Vietnamese on the losing side is another matter. During the war, one of the most closely watched streets in the city was a short one in Cholon called Ngo Quyen, where General Cao Van Vien, the chief of the Saigon government's Joint General Staff, lived—in three adjacent houses, with his family, aides, and guards. An area across the street had been cleared for his helicopter to land. In 1975, General Vien fled to the United States a few days before the end. His houses and the helicopter pad were initially seized and used as the headquarters for a supply unit. Then, as the Vietnamese Army began demobilizing, in the nineteen-eighties, they were handed over to the unit's officers. Three retired senior colonels of the unit got the three houses. The helicopter pad went to lesser-ranking officers, and they managed to build enough new apartments on it to shelter twenty-one families.

One of the three houses came with a garden. The retired colonel to whom it was given, a native of Hanoi named Tran Vu Hoa, who had spent fifteen years of the American war fighting in the South and was now sixty-two, had converted the garden into a café to supplement his pension. The lights of similar cafés can now be seen all over the city at night, for every family fortunate enough to have garden space tries to turn it into money. Colonel Hoa, a genial man who told us that he had fought for the independence of Vietnam and for friendship between the American and Vietnamese peoples, invited us in to see his house. His wife, who was also retired, had been an official in the Ministry of Transportation during the war. The Hoas shared their house with an unmarried daughter, three married daughters and their husbands, and six grandchildren. In addition, Mrs. Hoa kept six cats.

The "Vietnamizing" of the city has also gone forward in the renaming of streets. Most of the renaming has been done simply to honor Communist martyrs; for example, the main road into Saigon from the airport used to be called Cach Mang, but the signs now say "Nguyen Van Troi"—the name of a youth who tried to kill Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara and later died before a firing squad. In other instances, however, there has been a deliberate attempt to wipe away the shame of the colonial past. From the nineteen-fifties until 1975, a main crosstown street was called Phan Thanh Gian, for a nineteenth-century mandarin who poisoned himself to apologize to the nation after being pressed into ceding Saigon and most of the Mekong Delta to the French—the first Vietnamese territory they acquired. To the Vietnamese Communists, suicide does not atone for handing over part of the motherland to a foreign conqueror—Phan Thanh Gian should have refused, and died resisting. And so now history has come full circle: his name has been expunged, and the street has been renamed for the triumph that drove the French from Vietnam—Dien Bien Phu.

Louis Pasteur, the French chemist and father of bacteriology, remains an icon to older Vietnamese physicians, but to the Communists he nevertheless constituted too great a reminder of the colonial period to be given a reprieve for his good works. What was Pasteur Street is now called Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, for the fiery daughter of a mandarin family who became the most famous woman martyr of the Vietnamese Communist cause: she was guillotined by the French in Saigon in 1941. The original American Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, headquarters had been on Pasteur Street. Today, MACV's flagpole in front of the main building stands empty, for the building has been taken over by the Postal and Telecommunications Service, and the guardroom at the entrance to the building is now a shop selling push-button phones.

Renaming the city's main street was a problem for the new rulers. Until 1954, it bore the name Catinat. Ngo Dinh Diem then gave it a perfectly good Vietnamese name—Tu Do, which means "freedom." The name could not be allowed to stand after 1975, though; it was too redolent of the American era, and of Diem, who had killed thousands of Communists and non-Communists and imprisoned tens of thousands more in a white terror in the late nineteen-fifties, and of the generals who had followed him. The victors therefore renamed the street Dong Khoi, or Uprising. When Diem changed its name from Catinat to Tu Do, Saigonese continued to



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call it Catinat. Not until the late sixties, when Diem was long dead, did younger people begin to call it Tu Do. Now only out-of-towners call it Dong Khoi.

As in the renaming of Phan Thanh Gian Street, history has come full circle at the former Joint General Staff headquarters near Tan Son Nhut Airbase. The handsome compound there was built by the French generals in the nineteen-fifties as a military command center for all Indo-China. During the first war for independence, the Saigon generals sided with the colonizer and served as French lieutenants; and during the American years they sat in their headquarters uneasily, hoping that they had found a second protector. Now the Vietnamese who were in the jungle during the war years, and so were little known to anyone of consequence in Saigon, have made it a regional headquarters, and issue the orders there.

Lieutenant General Nguyen Thoi Bung, the commander of the Seventh Military Region, which encompasses Ho Chi Minh City and the arc of provinces around it, is not a polished man. He is from a village near Tay Ninh, a provincial capital northwest of the city. During the French war, he worked his way up from the ranks in the Vietminh, and when he moved to the North after the Geneva Agreements of 1954 he acquired an education in the military. He is a proud man. After marching back down the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the early nineteen-sixties, he led regiments in the first and most famous Vietcong division to be formed in the South, the 9th, and was the division commander at the end of the American war. "I was always an operational commander," he said, making the point that his performance in combat exempted him from having to take an assignment as a political officer.

We met with General Bung on the second floor of the compound's main building, where the French and the Saigon High Commands had held sway, and where he now has his offices. After we had talked to him for a while, he rose and, saying, "I have something to show you," led us downstairs. He opened a door and there, preserved as the victors had found it in April of 1975, was the main conference room of the Saigon generals. Arrows on acetate-covered maps lining the walls indicated—with a neatness that the Saigon officers had learned at the United States Army Command and General Staff College, at Fort Leavenworth—the positions of Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army units at the beginning of the last Communist offensive, in March of 1975. "They were correct about where my division was," General Bung said. But the arrows also revealed that the Saigon generals had not known where the main attack would occur. Gray Naugahyde chairs were drawn up around a table in the center of the room, waiting for the briefing officer to step up with his pointer and begin. The only indication of the passage of time was cobwebs in the corners and dust on the table and chairs. The only indication that the room had changed hands in a defeat was a single bullet hole through a map on a wall near the door. One could almost hear the men who had sat here talk of high strategy and maneuver—men who had not believed in themselves, leading an Army that had had no faith in itself. "I haven't been in here for three or four years," General Bung said. It was not difficult to understand why he preserved the place. The room was a trophy of sorts—proof to him and others like him that they had actually fought their way out of the jungle and won Saigon.

ON a Sunday morning, we stood in the living room of what used to be the British Ambassador's residence in Saigon, at 261 Dien Bien Phu. Also there were our guide-interpreters, Thang and Tien; two officials from the Ho Chi Minh City press office; Ambassador Vu Hac Bong, the chief of the Office of External Affairs; and an interpreter we had not met before, whose English was unusually fluent. We were awaiting the arrival of Nguyen Van Linh, the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, who had survived twelve years of French prisons, thirty years of war and manhunts in the South, and, after the 1975 Communist victory, a decade of political struggle to start his country down a new path amid the new turmoil of peace.

Until Linh emerged from the jungle, in 1975, virtually nothing was known

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Peaches redden,
and at day's end glow as if lit from within
the way bronze does,

before thudding down.
Mourning doves scatter at the sound,
shooting away in low trajectories,

and the mind starts
in spite of itself, even after weeks
of hearing them drop through the night

and all day long,
the intervals so far off any possible grid
of anticipation, and the impact

each time they hit
ground amid a racket of leaves
just different enough

from the time before,
and the time before that, you are tricked
out of thought, awake

to the sound
as the last of them come down
and the boughs slowly raise themselves up.

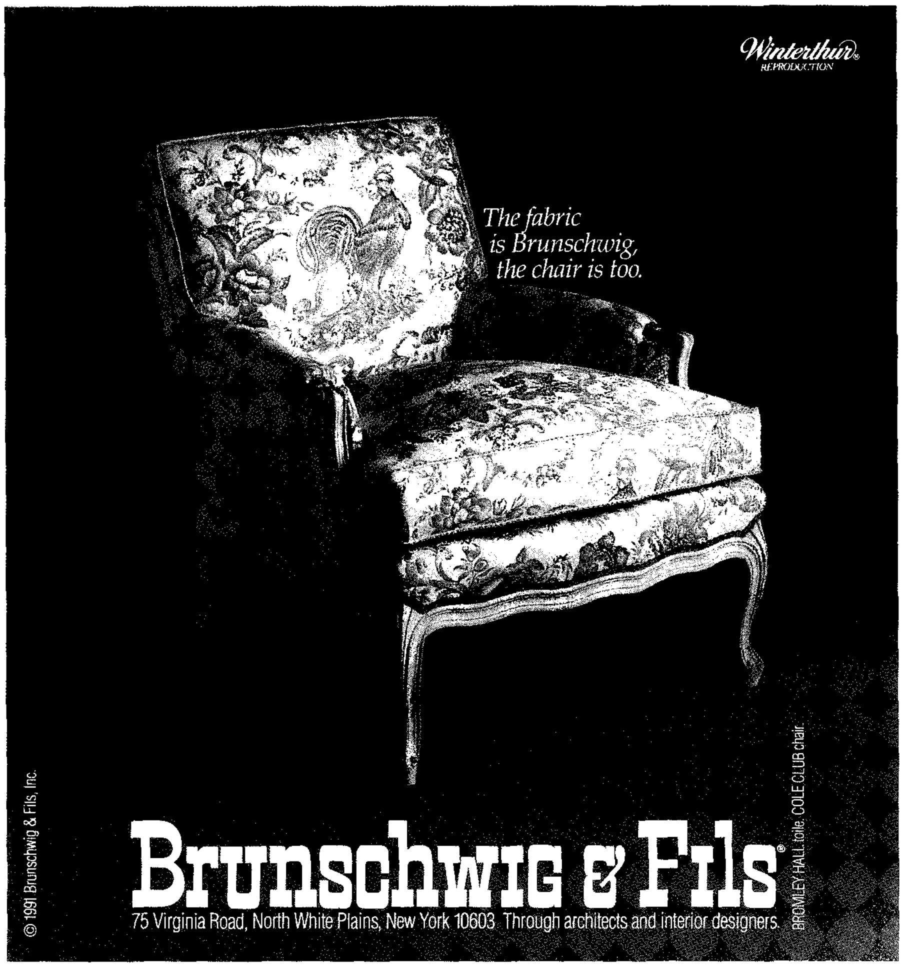
—AUGUST KLEINZAHLER

• •

of him, and, outside Vietnam, little is still known of him. Although he was an important Vietminh figure in the South during the French war, and one of the handful of ranking Communist leaders there throughout the American war, the Central Intelligence Agency was never certain whether he was one man or two men or several, because he used more than half a dozen aliases. Nguyen Van Linh is an early alias that he adopted as his name. His real name at birth—he was born in Hanoi on July 1, 1915—was Nguyen Van Cuc.

Linh was always different from the other Vietnamese leaders. Ho Chi Minh and many of the original generation of revolutionaries who followed him—like Pham Van Dong, long the Prime Minister of North Vietnam—were from mandarin families with nationalist sympathies. Linh was not. "My parents were well-paid civil servants of the French administration," he told us. His father, a professor in a lycée in Hanoi, died when Linh was eight, and the boy went to live with an uncle in Haiphong who was a minor official in the colonial legal system. The uncle enrolled him in a lycée there for a proper French education, but at that time nationalist sentiment was spreading among young Vietnamese, and Linh joined a clandestine youth organization. In 1929, at the age of fourteen, he was arrested with two classmates while distributing anti-French leaflets. He was sentenced to eighteen months in jail. In 1930, a series of uprisings in the North frightened the colonial authorities, and special tribunals were set up with the power to impose life imprisonment on dissidents or to condemn them to the guillotine. Although French law said that Linh should be tried as a juvenile, he was taken before a tribunal at the end of his eighteen-month jail term and re-sentenced as an adult to ten years on the penal island of Poulo Condore.

Linh told us that Victor Hugo and "Les Misérables," not Karl Marx and "Das Kapital," had pointed him toward Communism. He had given no thought to social issues until one day not long before his arrest. Several older members of the clandestine youth organization, who he later discovered already held Communist beliefs, had posed a question to him: After they had driven the foreigner from the country, would he be satisfied to live in a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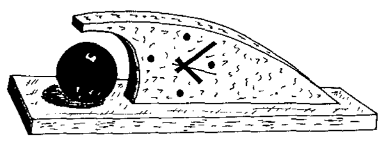
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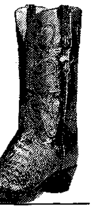
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Vietnam ridden by the social injustice he could see around him? "At that moment, I had started reading 'Les Misérables,' and the image of Jean Valjean was very striking to me—a poor man, so poor he had to beg for his daily bread," Linh told us. As he spoke, sometimes switching from Vietnamese to French, he often smiled or frowned in an expressive way and gestured with his small hands. Linh said that "Les Misérables" remained his favorite novel. "It touched very directly the strings of my heart—I was very moved," he said. So the answer he had given his confreres was "I could not be satisfied with a society where there is an enormous gap between rich and poor." Then he would have to struggle for two goals, they told him—for national independence and for social revolution.

Linh's term on Poulo Condore was a "university of the revolution," he said. Pham Van Dong, who was nine years older than Linh and a founding member of the Vietnamese Communist Party, was a prisoner on the island when Linh was there. He helped Linh polish his French and, more important, he was one of Linh's instructors in Marxism-Leninism. When Linh was released, in 1936, in an amnesty declared by the Front Populaire government in France, he joined the Party and went to work in Haiphong, organizing cells among laborers. He did not stay free for long. The outbreak of the Second World War returned Indo-China to its normal condition—repression. The French police picked him up in Vinh, in central Vietnam, where he had been sent to try to rescue a newly shattered Party apparatus, and shipped him back to Poulo Condore.

The reason that Linh remained a secret figure until 1975 was simple: he never left the South. Liberation from Poulo Condore in 1945, when Japan surrendered and the first war for Vietnamese independence broke out, meant for him thirty years of never having a safe place to sleep. Others who fought the French in the South moved to the North after the Geneva Agreements of 1954, but Linh was assigned to be one of the "stay-behinds," as the C.I.A. labelled them: Communists who were kept in the South to lead a political struggle for the all-Vietnam election in 1956 that had been provided for at Geneva—an election that never took place. In 1956, Le Duan, who had been another of Linh's prisonmates on Poulo Condore, was summoned to the North, and Linh replaced him as Party Secretary for the South, the ranking Communist in South Vietnam.

The Vietnamese have a special term for those who stayed in the South after 1954. They are known as winter cadres, because they survived the long winter of the Denunciation of Communists Campaign, carried on in the late fifties by Diem and the C.I.A. to track them down. ("Cadre" is a universal Vietnamese Communist term for an official or specialist.) Linh told us that nothing that occurred during the American war was as harrowing as the guillotinings and shootings and prison camps of Diem's campaign. Those were the worst years, Linh said—"a ferocious time." Between eight thousand and ten thousand Communists had been ordered to stay in the South in 1954, and the survivors in 1960 numbered between two thousand and twenty-five hundred. "I was nearly arrested many times," Linh said. "Had I been arrested, I would not be talking to you now." ("Our lives were counted in days and hours," one of Linh's fellow winter cadres said.) It was a relief, Linh said, when guerrilla warfare resumed at the end of the nineteen-fifties, and the Communists could shoot back. In the meantime, Ho Chi Minh and other Communist leaders had let loose a terror of their own in the North—a Chinese-style land-reform campaign orchestrated by Truong Chinh, then General Secretary of the Party and its chief ideologue. From 1954 to 1956, thousands of real and purported landlords were tried before kangaroo courts and shot, and their families were left to starve.

Somehow, Nguyen Van Linh emerged in 1975 with an open mind, a sense of humor, and an enterprising spirit, but those qualities quickly got him into trouble. His standing was so high with Le Duan, now the General Secretary, and other members of the Old Guard that in 1978 he was appointed chairman of the Socialist Transformation Commission for South Vietnam—the government body that was to oversee the absorption of the South.

He surprised and angered his mentors by advocating a mixed economy, in which "patriotic capitalists"—those who had stayed and were willing to coöperate with the new rulers—would be allowed to keep their factories and businesses. He also argued against the collectivization of agriculture. "The correct way would have been to help the peasants in the South to cultivate their own land, as farmers do in the United States," Linh said. Southern farmers would then have had "all the incentives to increase production and be efficient." He was denounced for "right-wing thinking," and his proposals were rejected. Before the year ended, Le Duan and the Old Guard in Hanoi imposed on the South the same centralized economy and collectivized agriculture that they had imposed on the North after 1954. A dour authoritarianism prevailed. Linh was appalled. "Socialism does not equal austerity, and cannot be identified with a soldiers' camp, where there is a uniform and the same meals for everyone," he said.

Linh had not abandoned the concern for social justice that "Les Misérables" first aroused in him. "As a Communist, I should always think of the interests of working people," he said. He had simply concluded that orthodox socialism did not serve those interests—that it was a fantasy, and would bankrupt the country. The touchstone of his thinking was, ironically, the lesson he had learned fighting the United States in the South—that nothing worked unless it was firmly grounded in reality. "The war against the Americans was not a war between equals," he said. "The United States Army was stronger than we were and had more weapons." The Vietnamese would have lost if they had simply traded blows, he explained, so they had to devise a means of wearing down the strength of their American opponent. "My comrades and I could not afford to be subjective in our conclusions," Linh said. "If we had been subjective, we would have immediately been crushed by reality. So I continued to think according to that pattern when I shifted to peaceful restructuring."

By 1982, Linh's persistence in his odd-man-out stand had exhausted the patience of Le Duan and other senior Party figures, and he was dismissed

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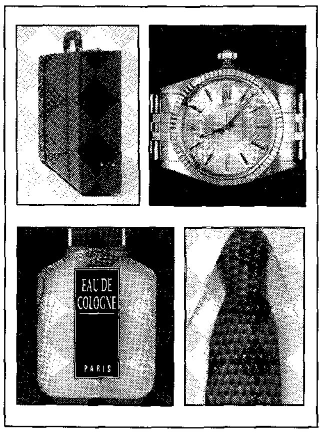

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AN ALARMING LACK OF PROGRESS IN CLEANUP.

When Congress enacted the Federal Superfund program in 1980, the goal was to quickly clean up America's most dangerous hazardous waste sites. Congress and many others assumed there would be only a relatively few such sites and that cleanup costs would be limited.

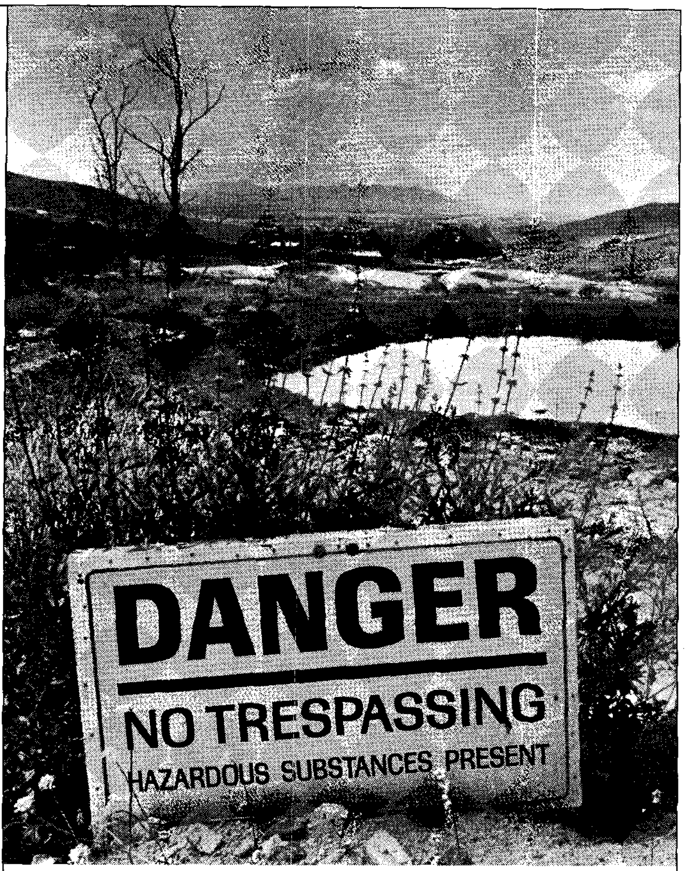
Now, after a decade of trying to make Superfund work, it's clear these assumptions were wrong and that a quick fix was never possible. What's wrong with Superfund and why has so little been accomplished?

The problem is twofold. First, the real scope of our nation's hazardous waste situation is far greater than Congress anticipated. With 1,200 priority sites already identified, growing numbers of sites are being found in every state. The Environmental Protection Agency expects that by the year 2000, there may be as many as 2,000 priority sites.

With rapidly rising cleanup costs, which now average about $25 million per site, the eventual price tag is staggering. According to a top government agency, cleaning up all of America's hazardous waste sites could take from 30 to 60 years and cost up to $500 billion!

A second problem is Superfund's alarming lack of progress in cleanup. A decade and billions of dollars later, fewer than 60 out of the 1,200 sites have actually been cleaned up.

Why? One major reason is Superfund's liability system. It requires that cleanup be paid for by establishing liability-who sent what waste, how much and where-and then negotiating or litigating with those believed to be responsible. While this sounds good in theory, it hasn't worked in practice. Instead, the result has been delayed cleanup and enormous legal, consulting and other costs unrelated to cleanup.



COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEMS INSTEAD OF SOLVING THEM.

This is because working out who pays and how much for cleanup is very difficult. Under Superfund, *anyone who simply used or owned* the site at any time could be liable for the entire cleanup bill. Users can include major corporations, small businesses, local governments, hospitals, nursing homes, schools, even individuals. And it does not matter who caused the harm or whether they did anything wrong. Superfund's retroactive

w system to achieve up of our environment.

liability provision makes parties pay for past actions based on today's standards.

For example, at 422 sites almost 14,000 parties have been notified that they could be liable. In turn, many of them are identifying still others who contributed in some way to the presence of waste at each site. And since Superfund liability deals with past waste disposal, the record of users can go back 25, 30 or even 40 years and can number in the hundreds.

The result? The focus on cleanup has been lost as private and public parties spend years in difficult but unavoidable negotiations and litigation, trying to work out agreements that would provide funds for cleanup. At some sites, more money has been spent resolving complex factual issues than on cleanup itself. This does a lot for lawyers and consultants, but very little for the environment. And of course, these costs are eventually passed on to all of us as consumers in higher prices for goods and services. Isn't it time to stop this wasteful process and get on with cleaning up our environment?

At AIG, we think so. There is little to be gained by arguing over waste disposal that happened long ago. America needs a system that will promote fast and effective cleanup, reduce unnecessary legal fees, spread the cost of cleanup broadly, and encourage responsible waste management practices today.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION: THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND.

To accomplish this, we have proposed creating a National Environmental Trust Fund, similar to the National Highway Trust Fund. Its resources would be used exclusively for cleaning up old hazardous waste sites. Superfund's tough liability provisions would still apply for future pollution, as would all other state and federal environmental laws designed to promote responsible waste management.

One way this fund could be financed would be by adding a separate fee to commercial and industrial insurance premiums in the United States. Even a modest assessment, say 2% of premiums and an equivalent amount for self-insureds, would provide about $40 billion over the next decade - more than enough to clean up the 1,200 highest-priority sites. Without endless time and money spent on legal debates about liability.

A national advisory board consisting of private individuals, industry and public officials could be charged with overseeing the program. We also suggest giving consideration to establishing local technical monitoring committees in each community. These groups of local citizens, representatives of industry and others would work with the Environmental Protection Agency and their own state on the particular cleanup site - from the very beginning of the cleanup effort.

YOU CAN HELP.

We've waited long enough and spent enough money in the courtrooms. Now it's time for action. A cleaner America should be all Americans' shared goal and shared responsibility.

To express your views, or if you would like further information about AIG's proposed National Environmental Trust Fund, write to Mr. M.R. Greenberg, Chairman, American International Group, Inc., 70 Pine Street, New York, NY 10270.

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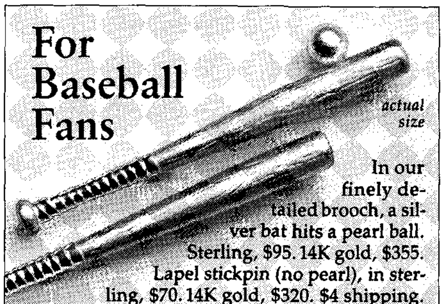

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from the Politburo. He had wanted to leave the Politburo and Hanoi anyway, and was offered a return to a post he had previously held, Party Secretary for Ho Chi Minh City, as a way of easing him into retirement. Linh did not see the job as the end of his career. "Ho Chi Minh City was a very useful testing ground for my ideas," he told us. There were men and women in the city with whom he had shared the experience of the American war, and who had also learned from it to think in the creative, unorthodox way he did, and would support him. "That's why I left the Politburo with a light heart," he said.

Linh began waging economic guerrilla warfare against Hanoi. He encouraged state-factory managers in the Ho Chi Minh City area to act on their own *initiative*; he also authorized private business ventures there. "Inspection delegations" were sent down from Hanoi to record Linh's misdeeds. The confrontation became extremely tense. But Linh got away with his defiance because the man and the moment were unique. In an age of monumental slaughters to settle scores, the Vietnamese Communists behaved with comparative restraint toward their defeated opponents after the 1975 victory. The much feared bloodbath did not occur. Instead, according to the Vietnamese government, nearly a hundred thousand people, almost all of them former Saigon officials and South Vietnamese Army officers, were imprisoned for years (the number of years depended on the individual's rank and record) in "reëducation camps." Conditions in such places were grim, but the reëducation camps were not like the Nazi death camps or the Japanese prison camps of the Second World War. Ninety-four thousand of the reëducation-camp prisoners survived and were released. The explanation for the restraint is complicated. The leadership feared a repetition of the bloody excesses of the northern land-reform campaign of the nineteen-fifties. The thirty years of war that began in 1945 had pitted neighbor against neighbor and family member against family member, and trials and executions would only have added to the bitterness. Besides, there seems to be an element of forbearance and proportion in Vietnamese culture, which had been suppressed during the years of war but reëmerged in its aftermath. (The one

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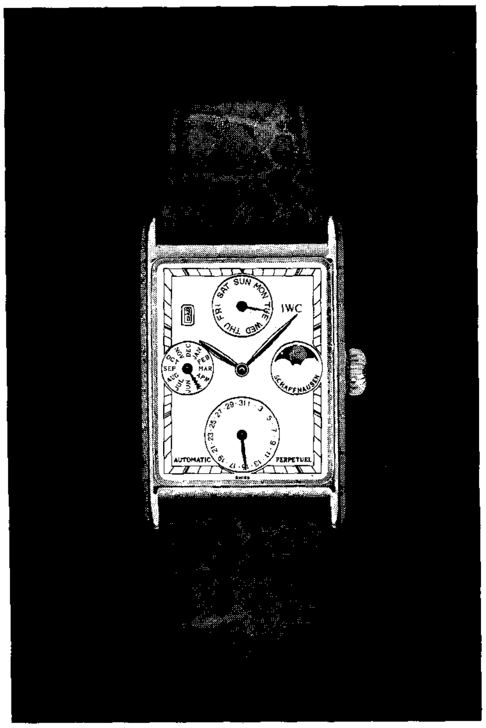
group to whom the Vietnamese Communists did exhibit great cruelty during the postwar years was the Chinese minority in Vietnam. Fearing that the Chinese might become a Fifth Column for Beijing, the Vietnamese authorities expelled them, and, as "boat people," thousands perished on the sea.)

Le Duan, for all his tyrannical dogmatism, never attempted to acquire the personal power of Mao Zedong, and never sought to purge opponents in a Vietnamese version of China's Cultural Revolution. He recognized that Linh, a "veteran of the Party" with an impeccable revolutionary record and war record, had a certain standing in the postwar politics of Vietnam—that he could be fired as Party Secretary for Ho Chi Minh City, just as he had been thrown out of the Politburo, but he could not be arrested and imprisoned or executed.

As it happened, the relentless deterioration in Vietnam's economic and social conditions created enough doubt in Hanoi to keep Linh from being fired. And he reinforced the doubt by inviting members of the Old Guard, like Pham Van Dong, to Ho Chi Minh City, to look at factories and other enterprises there and see that his way was working. By 1986, when Le Duan died, the reform movement was in the ascendancy. Ironically, Truong Chinh, the fanatic of the nineteen-fifties, who had been disgraced by the savagery of his land-reform campaign, and so had not been permitted to hold an executive office until, on Le Duan's death, he became interim General Secretary, promoted Linh's candidacy for General Secretary at the Sixth Party Congress that year. In a speech to the congress, Chinh attacked the postwar attempt to create an orthodox Marxist state as a colossal error. He, too, had been invited to Ho Chi Minh City by Linh to observe a different way. "Nothing is stronger than reality," Linh said to us.

Linh has often been called the Vietnamese Gorbachev, and there is some aptness in the comparison. He is a man of the system without being a captive of the system. He knows the end result he wants. "Socialism is prosperity," he says, and he is willing to compromise on his earlier principles to achieve that prosperity. The free-enterprise element of the mixed economy that he envisions means social inequities, but it also means jobs, which the Vietnamese



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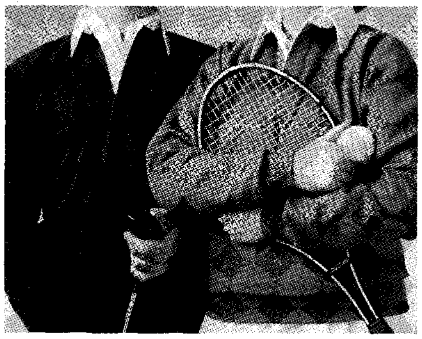

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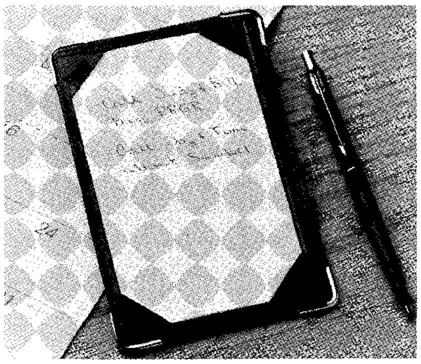

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so desperately need, and so, he says, "we have to accept a certain level of exploitation."

The predicament is how to achieve the end result. Time began to run out on Linh when he reached his mid-seventies. He had colon cancer in 1988, and underwent surgery in the Soviet Union. His associates told us that there had been no recurrence, but his health was precarious, though he still seemed vital. Besides, he was not the boss in Vietnam but the first among equals. The element of restraint that had protected him when he was a dissident worked against him after he became General Secretary. Decision-making in Vietnam is by consensus. To act, the General Secretary must persuade the twelve other members of the Politburo to go along with him. Naysayers can always slow him down. Linh was now attempting to place protégés—men in their fifties and sixties whom he trusted to carry on his ideas—in positions of authority. Because of his age and his health, he told us, he was determined to retire shortly—at the Seventh Party Congress, in June of 1991, when he would be almost seventy-six. "You cannot resist nature," he said. "I shall be a wrongdoer if I remain at my post." The other old men had protégés of their own, and sometimes blocked his appointments, yet he was convinced that he had made a start, and events seemed to bear him out. When the Seventh Party Congress convened, he was succeeded as General Secretary by Do Muoi, a Northerner he had converted to his way of thinking. Linh also maneuvered into the Prime Ministership a friend of his, Vo Van Kiet, who had been his subordinate in the jungle.

Linh's conviction that he had set his country on a course from which there was no full turning back, and the simplicity of his life, gave one the impression of a man who was at peace with himself. His home in Ho Chi Minh City is an unpretentious house, where he and his wife encourage the presence of their grandchildren. Did he still play Ping-Pong, as we had heard he liked to do? "No more Ping-Pong—well, perhaps from time to time," he said. "I do every day a kind of gymnastics appropriate for old people." He laughed as he mimicked himself at these exercises, breathing rhythmically and rotating his hands through the air. Linh performs the exercises, which are called T'ai Chi, for half an hour after he wakes—at 5 A.M., the same time he got up every day in the jungle.

During the war, the main Communist headquarters, where Linh served as deputy, was called the Central Office for South Vietnam. The American military, with its love of acronyms, shortened this to COSVN, and COSVN became synonymous with mystery, because the American generals were forever trying to find it and never succeeding. Richard Nixon announced on national television that he was going to destroy it during his sweep into Cambodia in 1970. He did not; he did not find COSVN, either. We had heard that the final site of the headquarters was being preserved, and we asked Linh if we could go there. "Of course you can," he said.

MANY of the big trees have been cut to let the light come down. It is no longer necessary to hide the thatched huts from the cameras of the American spy satellites and the eyes of the spotter-plane pilots. Someone has planted flowers along a path leading from a nearby post of the Frontier Guards, who watch over this place and its memories. Our escort, Huynh Van Ngoc, remembered that when he was first assigned to COSVN, in 1962, this region, out on the Cambodian border, was so wild that it held nearly as many tigers and elephants as people. The Vietnamese had appropriately called the region War Zone R, for *rung*, meaning "forest." Towering over dense underbrush were sixty-foot teak and mahogany trees, whose canopy of branches shut out the sun at midday. The tigers and the elephants are gone now—casualties not just of the war but of Vietnam's alarming population growth. The rain forest is receding rapidly under the saws and the axes of settlers seeking new farmland and of loggers feeding the sawmills of Ho Chi Minh City and the export trade to Japan. In the old days, people became scarce and the forest loomed soon after the road from Saigon passed the provincial capital Tay Ninh, sixty miles northwest of the city. The round mass of Nui Ba Den, or Black Virgin Mountain, still rises with dramatic suddenness from the plain beyond Tay Ninh, but the stripping away of the mystery of its rain-forest mantle, begun by the Americans with defoliants, has been completed by the Vietnamese. Gray boulders formerly hidden by trees gape amid scrub. The lower slopes are dotted with banana groves and plantings of manioc; higher up, the farmers have cleared pastures for their cattle and goats. Where in the past one was rarely out of the sight of trees, one is now rarely out of the sight of people: hamlets march along the road almost to the border post at Xa Mat. Many of the settlers' houses are also a rarity for rural Vietnam. The walls are of wide, rough-sawn planks rather than wicker, because the wood that is so valuable in Ho Chi Minh City is so cheap and plentiful out here. In the distance, beyond new rice fields, an occasional grove of tall trees bears witness to what once was.

Officials at the district center created to administer the area—now called Tan Bien, or New Border—were getting rich on their rake-off from smuggling out of Cambodia and from the logging operations; they had bought themselves a brand-new Toyota van. They were being paid so handsomely, in fact, that no one bothered to hide what was going on. Groups of big cab-over-engine trucks with Cambodian lettering on the doors frequently rolled past, headed east, into the interior of Vietnam. Neatly roped tarpaulins covered the loads in the back, but the consumer plenty of Ho Chi Minh City and the displays of VCRs and TVs, and the choices of beer—Carlsberg or Sapporo for those bored with Heineken—in the marketplaces of the towns we had passed through explained what was under the canvas.

"Odd finger finishes the fettuccine."

• •

An expanse of young rubber trees near Xa Mat hid a different kind of tale—the story of a new terror that had come to the border region after the American war. The trees covered the site where an entire hamlet of Vietnamese had been massacred by the homicidal Khmer Rouge troops of Pol Pot. The Vietnamese are bitter about the refusal of most of the world to understand why they invaded Cambodia; they attribute the refusal to the combined power of China, Pol Pot's principal supporter, and the United States, China's tacit ally in Cambodian affairs, to influence international opinion. The Vietnamese argue that they had no choice, and the facts lend substance to their argument. Most students of Southeast Asian affairs agree that the border attacks, which began intermittently right after the fall of Saigon and became serious by 1977, were initiated by the Khmer Rouge, and that they were pressed relentlessly despite Vietnamese attempts at conciliation. The majority of the towns and villages along the border had to be evacuated because of raids by the Pol Pot troops and constant shelling with mortars and artillery pieces supplied by China. China also sent hundreds of military advisers to Cambodia to guide Pol Pot's army.

Massacres such as the one at Xa Mat were particularly hideous, because the Khmer Rouge, who caused the deaths of seven hundred thousand to a million of their own people in a four-year reign of terror, specialized in beheadings and in atrocities like the eviscerating of pregnant women. By December of 1978, some thirty thousand Vietnamese troops had been killed in two years of border fighting, thirty thousand civilians had been killed, tens of thousands of people had been wounded, thousands of homes and public buildings had been destroyed, and border farmlands had been abandoned wholesale. At the end of that month, the Vietnamese Army invaded Cambodia, and within two weeks it chased Pol Pot and the remnants of his forces over to the Thai frontier. The Cambodian people, fearful and starving, momentarily forgot centuries of enmity, and welcomed the Vietnamese as their deliverers. The Vietnamese installed a client regime in Phnom Penh, headed by Heng Samrin, Hun Sen, and other leaders of the anti-Pol Pot faction of the Cambodian Communist Party. Still, the fighting did not

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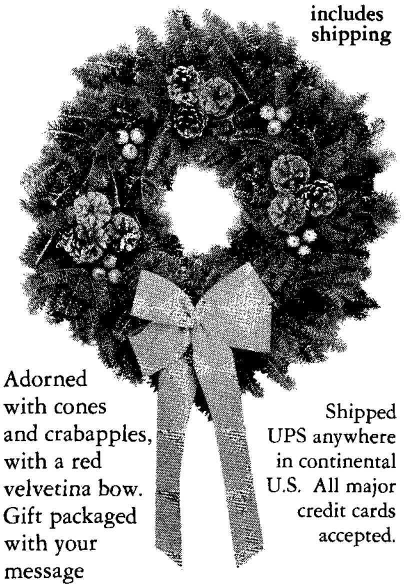

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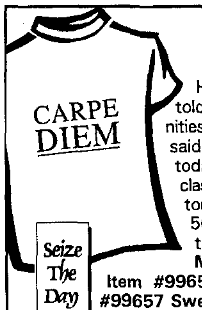

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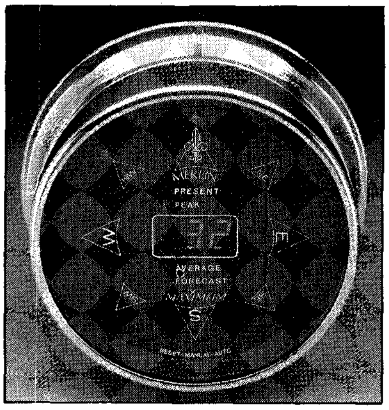
stop. Thailand, at the urging of Washington and Beijing, protected Pol Pot and his followers in border sanctuaries, while China and the United States conspired to rebuild the Khmer Rouge into a potent guerrilla force. By the time Vietnam withdrew the last of its armed forces—at the end of September, 1989—leaving behind military advisers and a small backup force to sustain the Phnom Penh regime, over twenty-three thousand more Vietnamese soldiers had been killed and fifty-five thousand seriously wounded. In all, nearly as many Vietnamese soldiers died in the border clashes and, subsequently, in Cambodia itself as Americans did in the whole of the Vietnam War.

The horror of Pol Pot remains vivid at Xa Mat. The rubber trees we saw had been planted on the site of the hamlet because no one would live there anymore. Farther down the road was another reminder of the border war—a large earth wall running parallel to the border which had been erected as a fortification. A few hundred yards past it were the Vietnamese and Cambodian customs posts, facing each other across the border itself. Three smuggling trucks were waiting at the Vietnamese post to pay their bribes.

A secondary dirt road turns off the main one at Xa Mat and runs north along the border—through forest again. Loggers were busy felling trees and loading them on trucks, but there were no houses nearby. Ngoc, our escort, said that the usual dangers of logging were compounded out here near the border by Chinese anti-personnel mines that Pol Pot's troops had planted among the trees. The mines remain active, because they are made of plastic that does not deteriorate, and, for the same reason, they are difficult to detect until a logger steps on one.

About ten miles into the forest, the road crossed a stream. The Toyota van with the district staff was in the lead. It forded the stream fully loaded. We had to get out of our lower-slung Volga so that the driver could get it across. A little way beyond was a dirt clearing with a flagpole and three thatched buildings—the post of the Frontier Guards who patrol this section of the border and still keep from unwelcome eyes the place that the American military sought and never



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found. The flagpole was bare. The Vietnamese national flag, a gold star on a red field, which first flew as the emblem of Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh in 1945, had just been given a washing and was hanging to dry with other laundry on a line next to a plank-sided building that served as the post headquarters and as home for the lieutenant in command and his deputy. Lacking cold-storage facilities, the Guards kept their chickens fresh—clucking in cages on one side of the room. Beside a bunk in a corner, a tape-cassette player was hooked up to a car battery. A single fluorescent light, powered by the post's small portable generator, hung over a plank table and benches. Ngoc gave the lieutenant a stack of paperback books he had brought out from Ho Chi Minh City to help the soldiers pass the time. "These men know what a hard life is," he said.

That morning, leaving Ho Chi Minh City, Ngoc had stopped the car in the marketplace at Go Dau Ha, where the road forks for Tay Ninh, and bought incense sticks. We learned why as soon as we walked past the post and down the path into the trees beyond. We paused at one of the open-sided huts in the old headquarters. A photograph of a gray-haired man hung from a roof beam at the far end of the hut. In front of the photograph was a traditional Vietnamese altar—homemade, of split bamboo—with a small sand-filled urn on it in which to set burning incense sticks. Ngoc stood before the altar, lit his cluster of sticks, and slowly lifted them toward the photograph, with the smoke of the incense rising as he bowed his head. Then he gave each of us a burning stick to set in the sand of the urn. The picture was of Pham Hung, who was born in the Mekong Delta in 1912; joined Ho Chi Minh's Revolutionary Youth League as a lycée-student radical in the nineteen-twenties; was condemned to the guillotine in 1931, a sentence commuted to life on Poulo Condore, where he remained for fourteen years; led the war in the South as head of COSVN from 1967 until the victory in 1975; was appointed Premier of Vietnam in 1987 as a supporter of reform; died in Ho Chi Minh City of a heart attack in 1988 after a meeting at which he urged a faster pace of change; and at this shrine in the forest entered the centuries-old pantheon of

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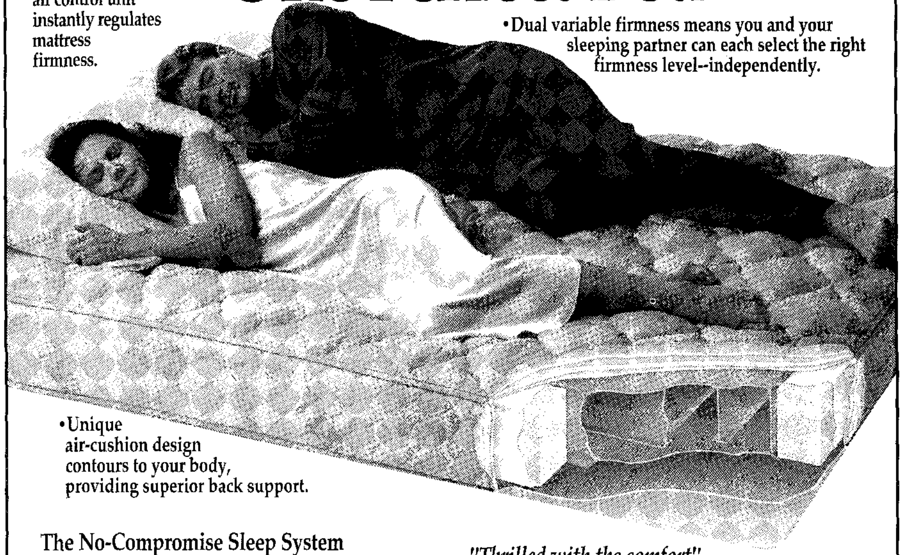

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Pham Hung's hut is one of half a dozen that remain of a community in which five or six hundred people once lived and worked under the protection of the teak and mahogany trees. Immense care was taken that nothing could be seen from overhead. The headquarters staff filled gaps in the natural camouflage of the forest canopy by tying the branches of trees together or by suspending trellises of bamboo and covering them with brush and freshly cut boughs. Similar precautions were taken to conceal sound and light. Gasoline generators that provided power for the radios and the lighting were put in pits to muffle the noise. Blackout curtains of plastic or nylon were hung around the sides of the huts at night. The security battalion kept troops dispersed in listening posts for several miles in every direction to prevent surprise.

The huts of the other leaders, like Pham Hung's, were pavilions about fifteen feet wide and thirty feet long, with roofs that had plenty of overhang to deflect the rain, and with earth floors tamped hard and built up about a foot and a half above the surrounding ground, to keep them dry. The main upright posts, the crossbeams, and the roof joists were stripped clean of bark and joined together by pegs; there were no nails. The roofs were thatched with a long leaf called the loyal leaf, because legend says that one of the emperors used it for thatch during his campaigns. Imperial lineage was not the reason that this particular leaf was used as roofing material at COSVN, however. It was used because it has a natural fire-retardant quality. One of the men from the district staff demonstrated that quality by tearing off a piece and trying to set it on fire with his cigarette lighter; the leaf would not stay lit. The sides of the huts were left open for maximum ventilation and comfort in the daytime. Ngoc recalled that at this last site there had always been some movement of air, even in the hottest season, in March and April before the monsoons, because the forest had only a double canopy—a cover of tall trees with a fairly light growth of pole trees and brush underneath. He recalled that at earlier sites, in denser, triple-canopy rain forest, the heat and the stillness would become almost un-

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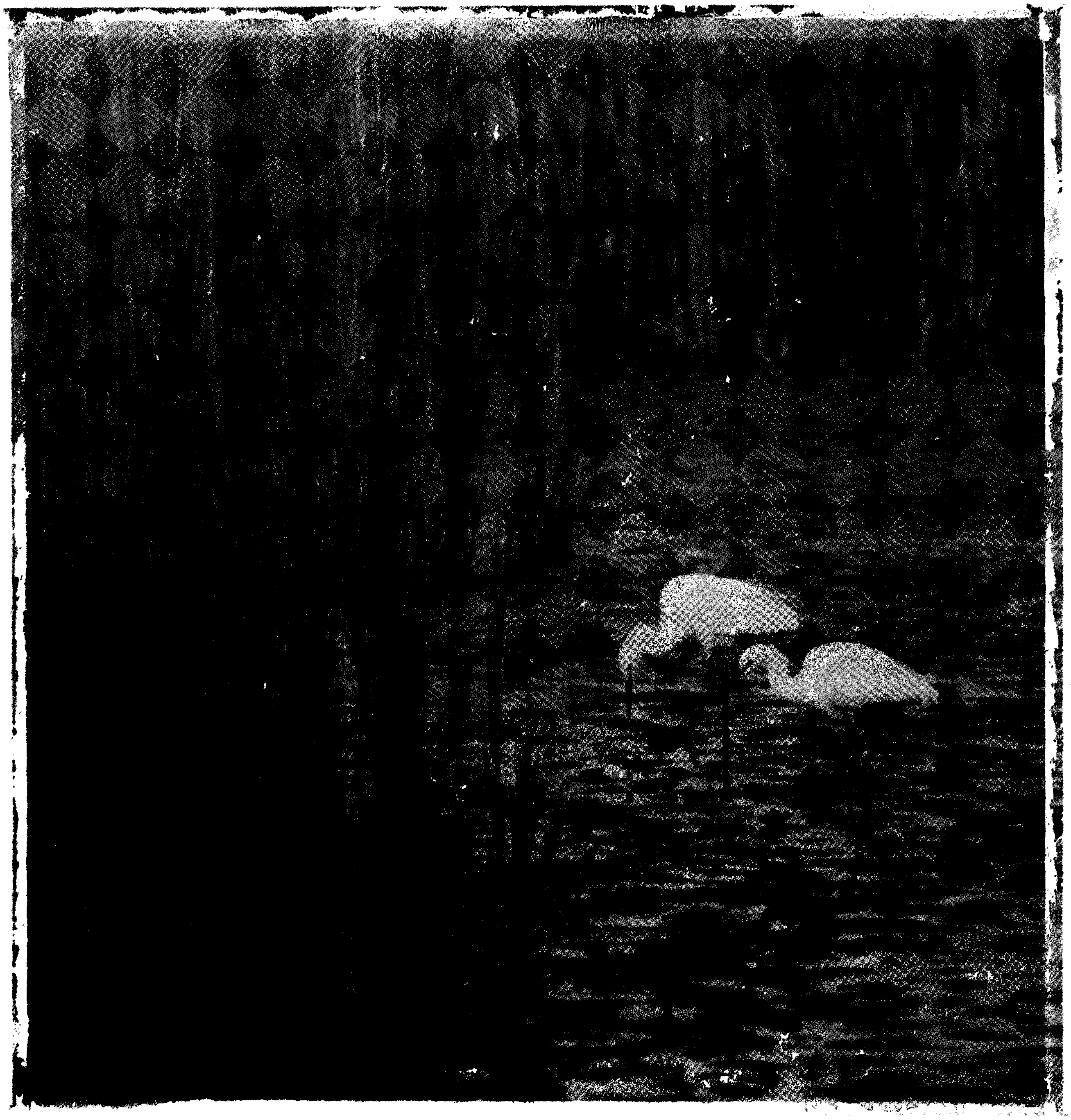

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bearable at the height of the day. After dark, everyone would walk out to the nearest clearing and lie there to breathe fresh air.

In the early sixties, Ngoc said, the headquarters of COSVN had always been situated in this region of Tay Ninh Province, and had moved only occasionally. Everything changed after the full-scale military intervention by the United States in 1965. A hide-and-seek contest, with lethal consequences if the Vietnamese lost, began as the American command used every possible means of intelligence to try to find COSVN: intercepting and decoding radio traffic and finding the transmitters; interrogating prisoners and defectors; analyzing captured documents; taking and studying aerial and satellite photographs; organizing long-range patrols by Special Forces teams. Air raids, which were carried out non-stop against all suspected Communist base areas, were the greatest fear of the Vietnamese—particularly B-52 strikes, for which there was no warning, because the big planes usually dropped their bombs from about thirty thousand feet. Slit trenches for instant protection were dug throughout the headquarters area, and each section had underground air-raid bunkers for all its personnel. Senior leaders, like Pham Hung and Linh, had bunkers right under their huts, so that they could seek shelter immediately if bombs began to fall while they were asleep, and another bunker nearby, to which they could dash during daytime raids. Each bunker had two entrance-exits, in case a hit collapsed one of them. An entrance to Pham Hung's outside bunker was still visible, amid some foliage about twenty yards from his hut; the opening was framed in logs reinforced with cement.

Nevertheless, despite frequent moves and every other precaution taken by the Vietnamese, relentless bombing won the Americans a round in the contest, although they did not learn of their success until later. In 1967, when the headquarters was situated only a few kilometres from the site we were visiting, Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Thanh, Pham Hung's predecessor as the head of COSVN, was killed in a B-52 strike. "After that," Ngoc said, "we hid in the forests of Cambodia." The headquarters continued to shift constantly, every few months, to nullify any patterns that American intel-

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ligence officers might be able to establish, but crossing the border did not bring immunity. The search went on, and the bombs followed. Ngoc recalled that the worst period had come after the nationwide Communist offensive at Tet, in January of 1968, caught General Westmoreland by surprise. The hunt for COSVN was intensified. In 1969, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, then the ruler of Cambodia, turned against the Vietnamese, and tacitly consented to wholesale bombing inside the borders of his country by the B-52s. President Nixon ordered a series of secret raids. No other ranking figure at COSVN was killed, because the headquarters site was never precisely located, but there were close calls.

Near the end of 1972, shortly before the signing of the Paris Agreement, which brought the withdrawal of American military forces, the Vietnamese decided to move COSVN back into Vietnam and set up the headquarters at the position we visited. The risk seemed acceptable, because the Vietnamese no longer had to worry about B-52 strikes, though they did have to continue taking precautions against raids by fighter-bombers of the Saigon government's air arm. They were shrewd enough to select an area that had already been bombed thoroughly. One crater was right behind Pham Hung's hut, and, since it filled with water during the rainy season, he converted it into a fishpond. (The crater was still there, full of milky water, but the fish were gone.) Despite the plenitude of streams in the area, water for drinking and cooking was a problem, because everyone was afraid that defoliants had poisoned surface supplies. The Vietnamese eased their worry by digging wells.

A couple of hundred yards from Pham Hung's hut, down a footpath through the trees, was the hut of Nguyen Van Linh, and beside it was a bomb crater. A table and benches had been set up there, and we all ate a picnic lunch in this parklike place. A photograph hanging from a roof beam above the table showed Linh as he appeared "*dans le maquis*," in Ngoc's words; many of the older, French-speaking generation of Vietnamese revolutionaries ironically use this Second World War French term to refer to their time in the jungle. Linh was wearing the loose-fitting, pajama-like work garb of a Vietnamese peasant and was sitting on the hammock in which he slept. An identical hammock had been slung between two posts of the hut.

The days at the headquarters had gone quickly, Ngoc said, because of the routine. Each section—intelligence, communications, operations—had its work to do. Ngoc, who had been a reporter for the Vietminh press agency in the South during the French war, was an information specialist at COSVN during the American one. Each morning, he summarized and interpreted the events of the previous day within Vietnam and internationally for Pham Hung, Linh, and the rest of the leadership. He typed his briefing reports on a Remington portable that he had bought in 1944, while he was a student at the French school of commerce in Saigon, and had carried back down the Ho Chi Minh Trail when he returned to the South in 1962. An elaborate field-telephone system that by 1972 stretched for hundreds of miles sufficed for much of the communication with subsidiary units. The phones were reasonably secure, because they could not be intercepted, as radio communications could, and the lines were patrolled to detect tapping. For longer distances, messages were coded and then transmitted by radio operators using Morse code. More advanced Teletype or telex systems were not employed, Ngoc said, because the lower units would have had to possess the same advanced equipment to receive and to answer. "With Morse, we could all talk to each other," he said.

Nighttime entertainment improved along with the long-distance phone system at this last headquarters base. Several black-and-white television sets were captured in the spring of 1972, when the North Vietnamese Army overran the district headquarters of Loc Ninh, in neighboring Binh Long Province. The captured TVs were presented to COSVN, and at 6 P.M., when the workday was over, the staff would raise the aerials and gather round to watch the programs broadcast on the television network that the United States had provided for the Saigon regime.

A couple of weeks before the collapse of that regime, Pham Hung moved to a brand-new secret headquarters at Ben Cat, just twenty-seven miles north of the city, to coördinate the final campaign with General Van Tien Dung, who had come down from Hanoi to command it. Linh stayed behind at COSVN to relay messages and keep track of things. Early on the morning of May 1st, the day after Saigon fell, all those at COSVN marched out to the road, loaded their gear onto trucks, and, in a convoy led by Linh, headed for the city that had been denied them so long. The trip took all day, because the roads were so crowded with troop columns, artillery, and tanks. At Tan Son Nhut, which they reached at 5 P.M., there was so much confusion that they pushed on to the Saigon regime's police academy, at Thu Doc, in the hope of finding a place to set up camp and sleep. Disorder and overcrowding drove them on once more—this time to the Saigon University faculty-housing village, on the Bien Hoa Highway. "The professors had run away," Ngoc said. They settled in for the night. Ngoc had brought his Remington portable along. He still types on it, at the Party Secretariat in Ho Chi Minh City.

SITTING at a table across from us in the rooftop dining room of the Hotel Caravelle, in Ho Chi Minh City, was a military-security officer having an expensive lunch. A gold ballpoint pen protruded from the breast pocket of his neatly laundered uniform. Parked in the square out in front of the hotel was a large white BMW sedan. The license plates, green with white lettering, were the kind issued to Vietnamese government agencies. A corrupt official in Hanoi would not think of using his misappropriated public funds to buy a BMW as his supposedly official car; no one would dare to flaunt corruption so openly there. The capital of the South may have been renamed Ho Chi Minh City, but more than a decade and a half after Nguyen Van Linh and Ngoc and their comrades

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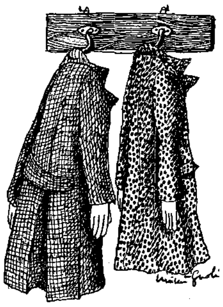
came in from the forest the ways of the Saigon they conquered linger to shape the society they are trying to build.

The South is Vietnam's California, and the former Saigon is its Los Angeles. The Vietnamese have lived in the Red River Delta of the North for thousands of years. The strengths there stem from tradition: they are the pride and self-respect drawn from long-honored ways of behavior. We noticed how keenly pride is felt during a walk on one of our first nights in Hanoi. A little girl approached us with a hand stretched out. Her mother was sitting on the sidewalk selling cigarettes. The woman leaped up, grabbed the child by the arm, and slapped her face. The mother was probably as hungry as the little girl, but she was not going to permit her daughter to beg. The South, however, is a relatively new place for the Vietnamese. They have lived in Saigon and the Mekong Delta in large numbers only since the seventeen-hundreds, when they took over the region after conquering the Cambodians, who had settled it earlier. The strength of the South is the freewheeling spirit that arises from this newness. Much that is unseemly accompanies that spirit. The Vietnamese say, "When you open the door to the breeze, the dirt comes in, too." In Saigon, the child would have been sent to beg. Yet with the freewheeling spirit also comes an enterprise that one does not encounter in the North.



Not that nothing has changed in the city. Since 1975, it has undergone a catharsis. There are beggars and prostitutes, but not the legions of both that existed during the American war. There are many homeless people sleeping on the sidewalks at night, but no teeming slums like those which sheltered the peasant refugees fleeing American bombing and shelling of the countryside. While corruption is serious, it does not approach the fundamentally corrupt nature of the Saigon regime, where everything was for sale.

The question that most immediately determines status in the postwar city and in the postwar society of the South as a whole is: What did you or your family do during the war? One recognizes the pattern right away in the people who dominate the city. They are winter cadres like Linh, who did not go to the North after the defeat of the French in 1954 but stayed the full course of the struggle against Diem and the Americans in the South.

The Ho Chi Minh City business tycoon Nguyen Thi Thi, or Ba Thi—Mrs. Thi, as she is called—still dresses as she did in the jungle, in the light cotton blouse and loose-fitting black pantaloons of a peasant woman. Not to be denied her eccentricity, Mrs. Thi also wears a peasant's conical straw hat as she moves about managing her multimillion-dollar companies. A native of the Mekong Delta, like one of her earlier patrons, Pham Hung, she participated in the first Communist rebellion there against the French, in 1940, when she was eighteen, and she lost her husband to Diem's guillotine in 1959. He was arrested because he was the Party Secretary for the Saigon suburb of Gia Dinh. She escaped, with her two daughters, and spent the American war in the jungle, as the head of the Vietcong Women's Federation. There is nothing rustic about her talent for making money. After the war, she turned a rice-distribution network for Ho Chi Minh City into a conglomerate that includes the Ho Chi Minh City Food Company, which is not only the major purveyor of rice in the city but also now the maker of more than two hundred other products for domestic consumption and export, such as manioc crackers, noodles, and cashew nuts; a rice-processing and export enterprise financed by Japanese capital; a bank; and the country's first oil refinery, Saigon Petro.

Mrs. Thi became a businesswoman by force of circumstance. When the farmers of the Delta reduced their planting after being driven into coöperatives in 1978, under Le Duan's orthodox Marxism, she could no longer get enough rice to feed the city. Linh, then in his first term as the city's Party Secretary, allowed her to obtain and sell rice at market value, and, since that meant giving the farmers a fair return, it stimulated output. The experiment provoked anger in Hanoi. "When you worked legally, it was irrational, but when you worked rationally it was illegal," Mrs. Thi said of those years. "The only way to convince people is to succeed."

We met with Mrs. Thi and an

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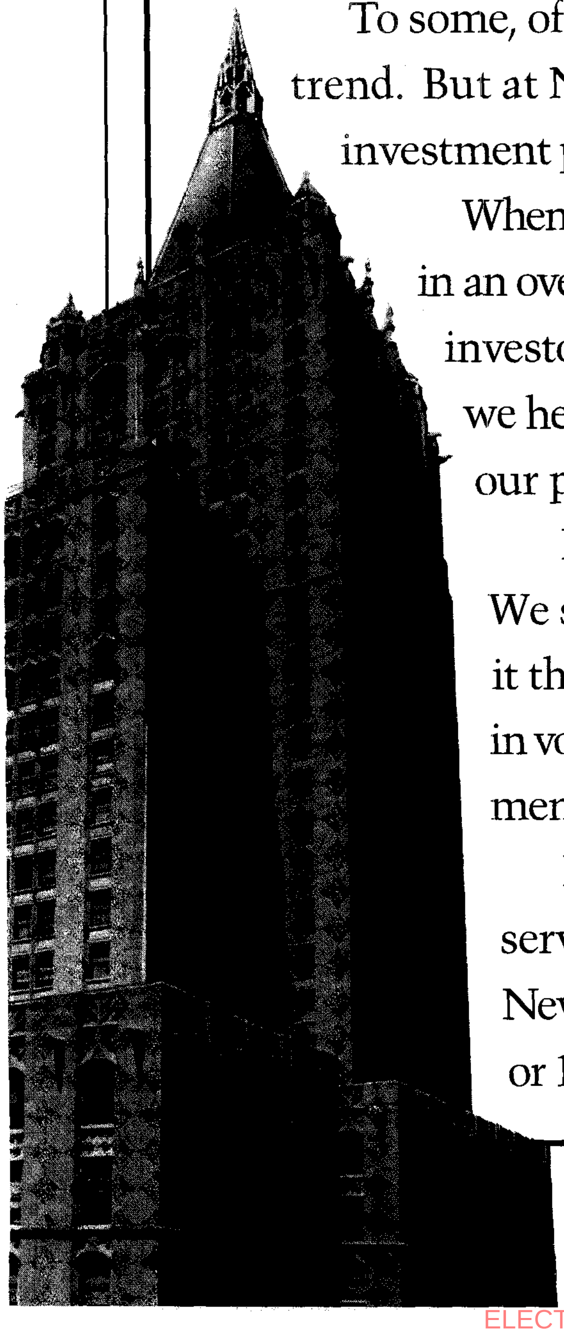

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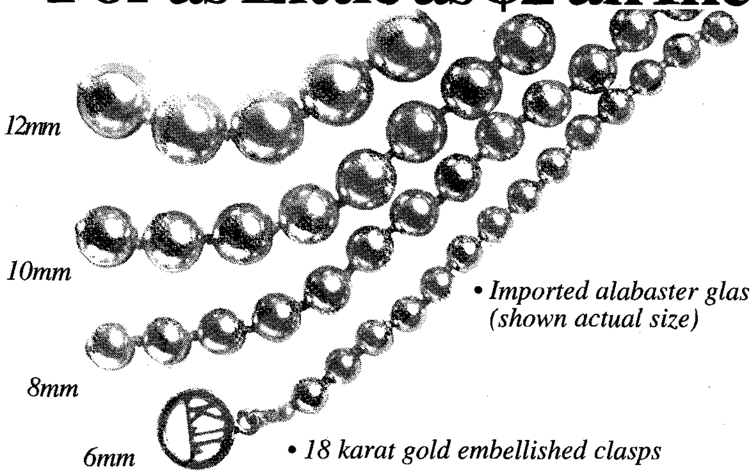

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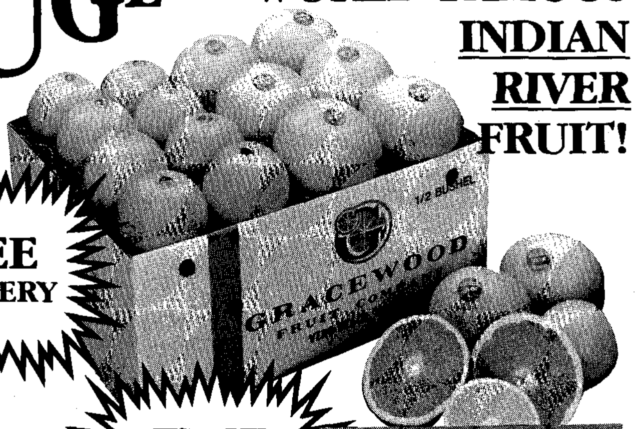

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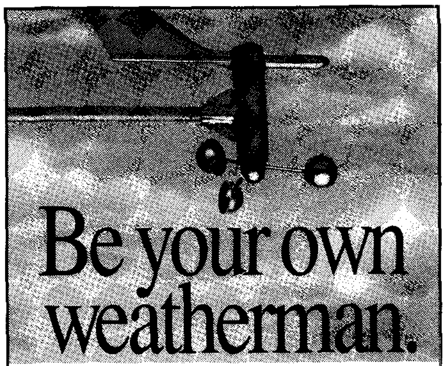
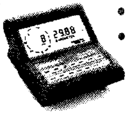
assistant, a man in his thirties who served as interpreter, in the second-floor conference room of a new rice-processing mill that she has set up in Binh Chanh District, about seven miles south of the city. The interpreter spoke colloquial American English better than the best interpreters we had encountered during our visit to the North. When four Japanese men in hard hats walked into the room in the middle of the interview, we discovered that Mrs. Thi's assistant spoke colloquial Japanese, too. He greeted them and translated a couple of questions from Mrs. Thi before the interview resumed. Only Mrs. Thi had so far attracted significant Japanese capital to Vietnam—seven and a half million dollars on a two-year loan from Satake Engineering to equip the Binh Chanh mill—because her position and her track record made investing with her safe. She was paying off the loan with exports of Mekong Delta rice processed at the mill.

The four Japanese were engineers from Satake who were supervising production for her, and thereby doubling their firm's insurance on its money. Her assistant turned out to be one of the still relatively small number of Vietnamese from the wrong side of the political tracks who are being given a place in the society if they have skills useful to those who run the country. He was at first extremely reticent about his background but relaxed somewhat as the morning went on and we toured the mill. He was actually fluent in three foreign languages, having taken his baccalaureate from the best lycée in old Saigon—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which is now a Vietnamese high school. He had then escaped the war in the way the sons of formerly well-to-do Saigon families did; he obtained an exit visa to study overseas. He received a bachelor's degree at Sophia University, in Tokyo, and then spent two years at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, in Washington, but had the bad luck to return in 1974. He was now thirty-seven years old, and this was his first good job since the 1975 collapse, thanks to Mrs. Thi's need for his languages. He made it clear that he did not want to see us afterward, out of her presence, and he would not relax enough to give us his full name—only his first name.

When we encountered other such people, we found that the pattern was

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the same. Forty miles southeast of the city is the beach resort of Vung Tau, at the tip of Cap Saint-Jacques, on the South China Sea. (It's a nascent oil town, too, these days, because of offshore drilling.) At Vung Tau, there is a new clinic that is a showcase of Vietnamese-American friendship. A group of American veterans raised money to pay for the construction materials and then came to Vietnam and raised the building itself in joint labor with Vietnamese veterans they might once have faced on the battlefield. Carved into the black marble of a dedicatory plaque are two clasped hands, on the wrist of one the Stars and Stripes, on the wrist of the other the star of the Vietnamese flag. The clinic director, a surgeon named Lam, also spoke excellent English. He had spent six years in one of the grimmest of the reëducation camps—in a wild area of the Central Highlands, where the borders of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia meet—because he had been a senior medical officer in the ARVN and the deputy director of the main military hospital. After his release, he had earned his living as a lowly technician at a local clinic in Vung Tau. Then the American veterans group had appeared. "You know how to deal with the Americans," he had been told, and he had been put in charge. A modest man, he rode a secondhand bicycle. At one of the better hospitals serving the Ho Chi Minh City area, the head of the department of internal medicine was also a former ARVN doctor, who had spent two years in a camp. He had had to switch from general surgery to internal medicine in order to find employment, but he was prospering at last and wore nice slacks and fancy loafers. He made the typical Saigonese comment on the privatization of medical care and the other changes taking place under Doi Moi. "We're marching backward," he said in French.

For every reëducated Saigonese who has made good, there are many thousands of people with scant hope. North of Cap Saint-Jacques is a stretch of beach called Long Hai, one of the most beautiful beaches in Vietnam. We wanted to go there, because during the war it had always been too dangerous to drive farther down the beach than a curve where some rocky hills descend to the sea in a point—the guerrillas had controlled the beach beyond the point. Around the forbidden curve,

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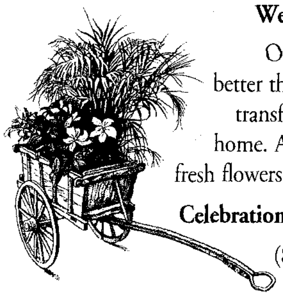

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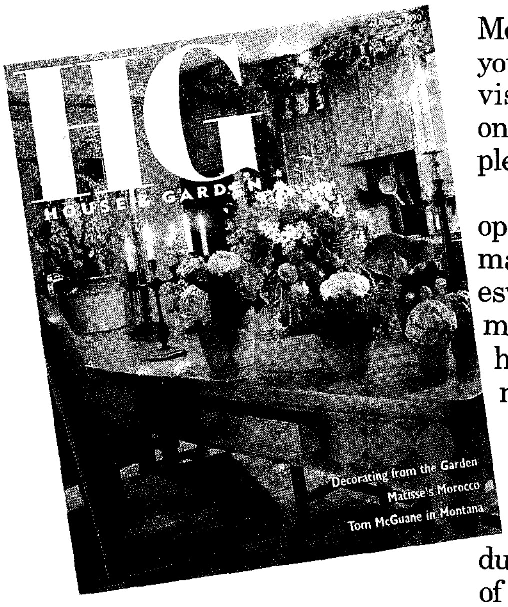

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and after several miles of relatively unspoiled shore, we found not solitude but a new settlement of thousands of people, living in thatched huts on the sand, who were now cooking their evening meal in the light of the beach at sunset. A middle-aged man in shirt and shorts stepped out of a crowd that gathered around us, and recited in perfect English the names of the United States Army captains and majors for whom he had worked. Did we know any of them and where they lived? He wanted help to get to the United States. He said that he had been a driver for nine years at an Army ammunition dump near Saigon, and had paid for his services to the United States government with three years of mild reëducation in his home village. He and his wife had drifted to this settlement of squatters a couple of years earlier in search of a livelihood. They were cooking and selling noodle soup, and were doing about as well as their neighbors who had not worked for the Americans, and who scraped by with fishing, and laboring in a village center farther down the road.

Nguyen Phi Tuyen, of the Ho Chi Minh City Office of External Affairs, who runs the Vietnamese side of the Orderly Departure Program, the legal way to leave the country, told us that Vietnamese policy was to allow all the ninety-four thousand former Saigon-government officials and Army officers released from reëducation camps, as well as their dependents—roughly half a million people—to emigrate if they wished to do so. There is no doubt that most would leave if they could. Only about a hundred and twenty people—eight generals, twelve colonels, several former C.I.A. agents, and various police and security types who worked in interrogation centers where torture was common—were still imprisoned; they were at the one remaining reëducation camp, near Ham Tan, northeast of Ho Chi Minh City. The Minister of the Interior in 1989—Mai Chi Tho, a younger brother of the late Le Duc Tho, who faced Henry Kissinger across the negotiating table in Paris—told us they were still being held because they were "the most dangerous." They were alleged to have committed "terrible crimes," he said, and "their thinking hasn't changed." He added, "If they would admit what they've done, they'd be released." He maintained that confining the hundred and twenty men

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was more humanitarian than putting them on trial; if they had been tried, he said, "some might have been executed once or twice or several times because of their guilt."

Washington has so far taken about seven thousand of those who have been released—for a total of thirty-three thousand people, including dependents—under the category of the Orderly Departure Program dealing with former reëducation-camp prisoners. Nguyen Phi Tuyen argued that the United States was morally obligated to accept the entire ninety-four thousand and their families, because it had stigmatized them by encouraging them to take the American side. He said that Vietnam also feared the addition to its social problems of a large group of people in permanent limbo. He added that now that some had been accepted, all pinned their hopes on emigration, regardless of the possibility, and would never settle into permanent work and living patterns. Something that Tuyen and other officials didn't mention is Vietnam's wish to rid itself of a minority relegated to the end of the line in a country that has no jobs anyway for a quarter to a third of its unstigmatized citizens—a minority that will also never reconcile itself to the outcome of the war, because the one thing that the years of confessing and listening to lectures and performing supposedly "cleansing" manual labor in the camps did not do was to change minds.

A park behind a Roman Catholic cathedral in the center of Ho Chi Minh City has been unofficially named Reëducation Park. The grassy expanse faces the External Affairs Building, which was once the Foreign Ministry of the Saigon regime. Every day, three weeks out of the month, Orderly Departure Program officers from the American Embassy in Bangkok sat in offices assigned to them at the back of the building and interviewed applicants for immigration. The former Vietnamese civil servants and the ex-captains and majors and lieutenant colonels gathered in the park. For some, material want was not the worst problem. The fortunate ones lived considerably better than the poor in the North, on remittances from relatives who had made it to the United States in the flight just before the fall in 1975, or had since done so by boat or through the O.D.P. The people in the park gossiped to pass the time, and they hoped. Having tied their destinies to the great foreign power during the war, they waited for it to rescue them.

Not all the losers were on the Saigon side, of course. The one place we were asked *not* to go to in Ho Chi Minh City was a house on Truong Dinh Street that is the headquarters of the Club of Former Resistance Fighters. Nobody forbade us to go, but we realized that if we did we would get Thang and Tien, our guides, into trouble and would also embarrass the officials at the Office of External Affairs, who were trying to be helpful. Those who gather at the Truong Dinh Street house and at branches of the club in the eighteen districts of Ho Chi Minh City are the losers the authorities really worry about. They have a standing that no ex-ARVN officer can ever possess. While several of the members are retired generals, the more representative are lower-ranking men and women who fought and suffered and now find themselves with little but their self-respect in the poverty of a bleak peace. What differentiates them from so many like them elsewhere in the country is that they are articulate people who live in a place where the ferment of independent thinking leads to such acts as the formation of their club.

It was not necessary to go to Truong Dinh Street to hear members speak of their disillusionment. "We spent our lives to have a Vietnam that was independent, free, and with happiness for everyone," a retired major who is active in the organization said over lunch one day. "Now we have independence but not happiness. The bureaucrats have the cars and the franchises, the mutilated are poor and have nothing." The major, who is in his late sixties, is in frail health and is unable to exist on his pension. His wife works as a seamstress to help support them. He has prosperous relatives in the United States, but his pride will not let him turn to them for money, because they split over the war. A former lycée classmate and friend who had once been on the Saigon side but then drifted leftward after immigrating to the United States in the early nineteen-sixties discovered during a recent visit to Vietnam that the major was going blind from cataracts in both eyes. The military hospital, where he was theoretically entitled to free care, no longer had the facilities for such surgery, and he could not afford a private doctor. The lycée classmate hired an eye surgeon to remove the cataracts.

The club claims to have thousands of members in the Ho Chi Minh City area. Eligibility is not confined to retired military personnel. Any man or woman who can prove that he or she participated in the resistance against the French or the Americans—as a member of the underground civil administration; as a teacher, a medical worker, or a labor-union organizer; or in any other capacity—can join. (The club even has an overseas member—a former lycée teacher in Saigon who was jailed by the Thieu regime for displaying a Vietcong flag.) It gave up publishing a newspaper after the first two issues were seized. The club had applied to the Politburo and the National Assembly for a charter to form a national federation. The retired major we had lunch with was certain that if permission were to be granted, the club would rapidly acquire hundreds of thousands of members all over the country. The response of the authorities was to create a separate, government-sponsored national veterans' association. In a society where a war record carries a certain immunity along with respect, an independent national veterans' federation would pose a serious challenge to the monopoly on political power held by the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Democracy has not fared well in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese have no democratic models they can look to among their immediate neighbors. Thailand is a right-wing state ruled by its military. Singapore is a civilian dictatorship under Lee Kuan Yew. The Filipino oligarchy pretends to honor democratic forms in an archipelago where chaos reigns amid guerrillas and private armies. Nor do the Vietnamese have any tradition of democracy. Ironically, the Communist Party, with its hierarchy and ritual, has become a kind of modern counterpart of the Confucian mandarinate that governed the country under the em-

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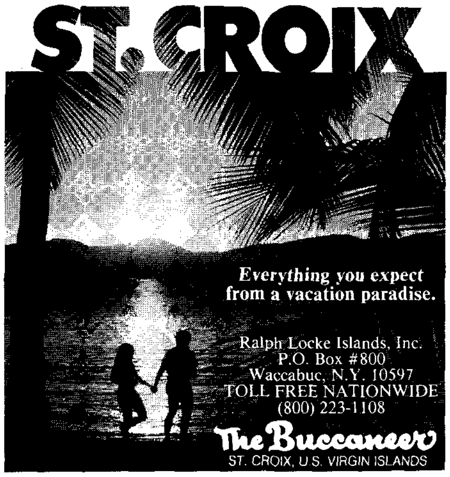

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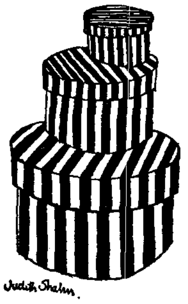
perors, before the arrival of the French. Nguyen Van Linh and those who think like him believe that Vietnam can create prosperity through economic liberalism and escape political instability by maintaining the dominance of the Communist Party. The retired major who belonged to the Club of Former Resistance Fighters was also a forty-year veteran of the Party. "We are discontented not with socialism and *the Party but with the distortions and* errors," he said. "We want a true socialism. We want a Communist Party that is powerful and capable and represents the people and the spirit of the country." Most Americans see a contradiction between economic liberalism and one-party politics. Most of the Vietnamese who won the war see the issue in a different perspective. They say they want a society ruled by law, not caprice; want public officials held to account, and corruption checked; and want more of what Linh calls "the democratization of social life" in cultural and political freedoms.

LY TONG BA was one of the losers on the Saigon side. He had not run away in 1975, and had spent twelve years and eight months initially in captivity and then in reëducation camps. Ba had been a favorite of the American advisers, because, while few ARVN officers ever fully measured up to the United States Army's standards of aggressiveness, Ba would fight, and he was not a crook. His house, in Saigon, was comfortable, with modern plumbing and air-conditioning, but was modest in comparison with the houses of his fellow-officers. He never owned a Mercedes-Benz, settling for an older Peugeot staff car and a civilian jeep, which he painted white. At the time of the North Vietnamese Army offensive in the spring of 1972, Ba was a full colonel commanding an infantry division in the mountains of the Central Highlands. The other ARVN commanders in the Highlands either ran or wanted to run; Ba agreed to stay and try to hold the key town of Kontum. Supported by B-52s, he helped win a major victory there that turned back the offensive, saved the Nixon Administration from the embarrassment of a rout, and staved off the collapse of the Saigon regime for three years. Thieu rewarded him with promotion to one-star general. But when the crisis was past, and Ba's American patrons were departing, Thieu took the division away from him, because Ba would not coöperate in corruption with a new corps commander.


Judith Shahn

We found him through his former enemies. The address we had obtained for him before leaving the United States—the one in the files of the *American side of the Orderly Depar*ture Program—turned out to be incorrect. The people at that address, in a working-class suburb on the northeast side of the city, seemed pleased to see visiting Americans, but they knew nothing of an ARVN general named Ly Tong Ba. The Office of External Affairs gave us the correct address, in another working-class neighborhood, this time in Cholon. Ba was living with a sister and the sister's daughter and her family, all crowded into a one-room apartment on the second floor, with a curtained sleeping area for the young woman and her children. The toilet was down some rough concrete stairs to the rear of the first-floor apartment, where the landlord, a former Vietcong, lived in similarly crowded quarters with his family.

Thieu had apparently become desperate enough toward the end to let corruption take a back seat. In December of 1974, he gave Ba command of the 25th ARVN Division, which was then deployed at Tay Ninh. The ARVN troops were on their own; the last of the American forces had gone home almost two years earlier. On March 10, 1975, the Vietnamese Communists loosed their offensive with a surprise assault on the town of Ban Me Thuot, in the lower Central Highlands—a hundred and sixty miles northeast of Tay Ninh. They seized the town immediately and scattered the reserves dispatched by helicopter to retake it.

Thieu panicked and started issuing unrealistic and contradictory orders. Ba wanted to pull his division back to the former base of the United States 25th Division, at Cu Chi, closer to Saigon, and, with other ARVN divisions, form a defensive belt around the city. Their slim hope was, Ba argued, "to bring the tiger out of the jungle and kill him"—to entice the North Vietnamese Army into fighting on the

ARVN's terms. They would have to repeat on a larger scale the defensive success at Kontum, despite the fact that they now lacked the critical component of American air power. Thieu wouldn't hear of it. He wanted Ba to counterattack to the north, into the Highlands. Ba replied that the maneuver would be difficult even for an American Army division, and was fantasy for the 25th ARVN—the tiger would devour the division. "We will lose the whole 25th," he told Thieu. "We will lose the whole game. We will maybe lose Saigon."

In the meantime, Thieu had brought about a debacle by ordering his generals in I Corps to abandon the Highlands and the former imperial capital of Hue, farther north. Thousands perished as the ARVN troops fled pell-mell, yet Ba still could not get permission from Thieu to withdraw from Tay Ninh. By the time he received permission, in late April, the North Vietnamese Army was encircling the 25th, and he had to fight his way back to Cu Chi. All he managed to get through to the former American base was his reconnaissance company, a couple of battalions of infantry, and a platoon of tanks.

At 5 P.M. on April 28th, they were bombed by planes from their own Air Force. Three A-37 jets tried to knock out Ba's command post, in the old American bunker. The pilots had defected after they and their aircraft were captured by the advancing North Vietnamese, and the air raid constituted a signal that the North Vietnamese generals were clearing away the last obstacles to an assault on Saigon itself. The Communist artillery opened up next, with a terrifying barrage, and then the North Vietnamese commandos struck. The remnants of Ba's forces fought into the night and through the morning of the twenty-ninth. Early that afternoon, he decided that they had to break out and reorganize at the town of Hoc Mon, ten miles farther south, near the edge of the city. An orderly retreat proved impossible, however; the men had lost heart. They ran out through the main gate of the base in a rabble, ignoring Ba's shouts to stop, jostling him aside despite his rank.

Within an hour, Ly Tong Ba, general of the ARVN, was lying on his back under the water of a flooded rice field, trying to poke only his nose

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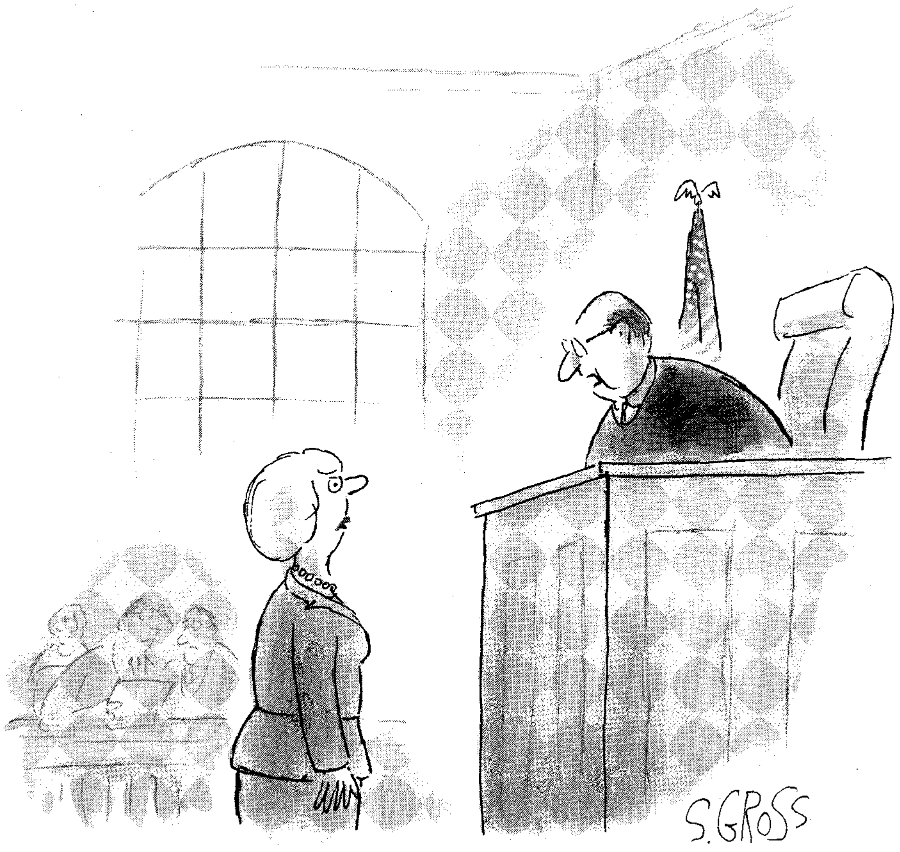

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above the surface in order to breathe without being seen. He had learned the trick from the Vietcong; the guerrillas had used it in the Mekong Delta to escape his armored carriers. Now he had just one soldier left, his bodyguard, who was lying beside him. Ba had managed to gather his staff and the division reconnaissance company and set off for Hoc Mon on foot, but his enemies had anticipated this move, and were waiting in ambush along the road. "Shoot back!" Ba yelled when the ambushers opened fire. No one obeyed him. "We lose now, General," one of his staff captains said, and then, like the others, the captain obeyed the Communist soldiers, who called to them with battery-powered loudspeakers to drop their weapons and surrender.

In a couple of hours, everything seemed quiet. Ba lifted his head out of the paddy water and then slowly stood up. The Communist soldiers had left, with their captives. "We were two lonely men—I and my bodyguard," he said. They stripped off their uniforms and changed into escape garb that Ba had brought for such an eventuality—the black pajama work clothes of Vietnamese peasants. It was about 5 P.M. Ba explained to his bodyguard that they would lie in the paddy field until dark and then slip away to Saigon.

He had to get back to Saigon to save his family, because the Americans, too, had let him down. He felt angry and betrayed. Four days earlier, when he could still use the helicopter assigned to a division commander, he had flown to Saigon from Cu Chi, and had gone to the Embassy to see a retired United States Army general working for the C.I.A.—a man he had known and coöperated with for more than a dozen years. Ba told him that he was going to stay with his troops until the end, but that he wanted his wife and three children evacuated to the United States. The man made excuses about being busy and the evacuation flights' being full. He would do what he could, he said. Ba knew now that the man had done nothing, because his wife had managed to get through on the phone to his Cu Chi command bunker from their house in Saigon that morning, and had asked for advice. "Wife, take an initiative—I'm fighting now," Ba told her. Then the phone line went dead. As he lay in the mud-gray water of the paddy field, he could see an American plane overhead. He wished that he had a radio to call to it for help. He could not know that the plane was one of many fighter-bombers protecting Navy and Marine helicopters of the Seventh Fleet that were conducting a wholesale last-minute evacuation of Saigon. Some seven thousand people, most of them Vietnamese, were lifted out before the North Vietnamese tanks burst into the city, on the morning of the thirtieth. Ba's family was not among them.

Darkness brought a glow in the sky to the southeast: Tan Son Nhut Airbase was burning from North Vietnamese artillery shells. Ba and his lone soldier welcomed the fires. They intended to use the glow as a beacon to guide them to the city. First, however, they had to get across a river, and the bridge didn't belong to their Army anymore. They could hear local Vietcong guerrillas who were standing on the bridge calling to the troops in a nearby ARVN post to surrender. They took off their boots to swim to the other side, with Ba leading the way, but somehow they ended up back on the same bank. It started raining hard, and the clouds obliterated the glow of the fires at Tan Son Nhut. They got lost. Ba had forgotten to bring a compass, and his bodyguard's compass had been ruined by the paddy water. They lay down in a cemetery to sleep for a while, Ba on top of one of the tombs, his bodyguard on the ground beside him, and then wandered some more, until Ba grew too exhausted to continue. Their boots were gone now, and one of Ba's feet ached from a wound: during the fighting earlier in the day, a piece of shrapnel or some other jagged object had sliced into it.

Ba decided that they would wait until daybreak and then hire a three-wheeled minibus, of a sort common in the countryside, to drive them to Saigon. At dawn on the thirtieth, as the last of the evacuation helicopters was lifting off from the roof of the United States Embassy in the city, Ba and the bodyguard crossed a rice field and were about to enter a hamlet when a voice shouted "Halt!" A teen-age farmhand stepped out of the trees with an AK-47 assault rifle levelled at them. The young guerrilla had obviously been watching them. "Finished," Ba's bodyguard said. Ba had a pistol in a pocket of his black pajamas, but to try to use it would only get them killed. He tossed it into the paddy water, and then stripped off his gold Omega watch, because he didn't want his enemies to have it, and tossed it away, too. Ba had never risen beyond one-star general; despite Ba's faithfulness, Thieu had not rewarded him with a second star after giving him the 25th Division. Nevertheless, when Ba had changed into the black pajamas he had carefully detached the single silver star from each of his uniform collar tabs and put them in a pocket. The stars followed the pistol and the watch into the mire.

Ba was certain that he would be shot. His certainty increased when, that afternoon, he found himself transported back to his Cu Chi base, now the headquarters of the 320th North Vietnamese Army Division. The 320th was one of two N.V.A. divisions that he had helped to defeat at Kontum in 1972. Along with his American mentors, he had been responsible for killing thousands of N.V.A. soldiers there. One day just before the end of that battle, the voice of a man who was apparently a senior N.V.A. officer had broken into a radio conversation and urged Ba to cease being "a tool of the imperialists" and come over to "the side of the people." Ba had taunted the man, saying, "You're losing, so now you want to talk." The voice had replied, "You hardheaded son of a bitch, you're one of the first we'll shoot when we win the revolution."

On the afternoon of May 1st, Ba and five of his senior staff officers, who had also been captured, were loaded into a minibus and taken to a house near the market in Cu Chi. A fine meal of chicken, rice, and other food awaited them at a table. They were told to sit down and eat. Ba had not eaten for two days. Assuming that the delicious-looking chicken was a last meal for condemned men, he sat down, as ordered, but refused to eat. The others did eat. Ba regretted his decision late that night, back in the darkness of the bunker at the base where he and his staff officers were imprisoned. He was getting hungrier, and there was no indication precisely when he would be shot.

Suddenly, the door of the bunker opened, and a voice called for Ly Tong Ba to come out. "Follow the

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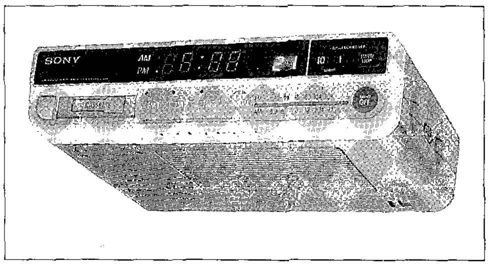

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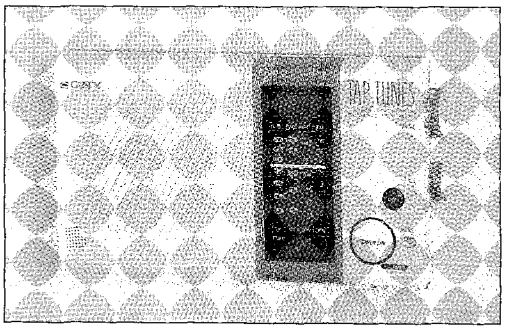

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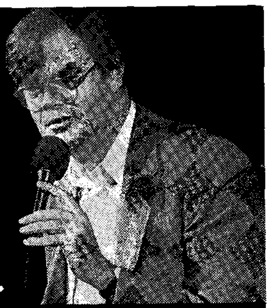
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man with the flashlight," the voice said as Ba stepped into the night. He did as he was told. The armed man who had given the command and several others fell in behind him. Ba wondered what the bullet would feel like when it hit him in the head. Would they tie him up before they raised the muzzle to his skull? The flashlight led him to a small building, where he found two uniformed men sitting at a table illuminated by a kerosene lantern. Ba assumed that they were N.V.A. officers, because they had envelope-style briefcases for maps and documents. "Sit down, General," one of them said. Good, they want to talk, so I won't be shot for a while, Ba thought. One of the officers asked if he had any troops hidden in the area. "No, I'm the last troop," Ba said. Was he sure? Yes, he was sure.

A large glass of tea was placed in front of him, and the interrogators slid paper and pen across the table and told him to write out his curriculum vitae. He looked at the tea and decided that it was probably poisoned. He was thirsty as well as hungry. "Let's finish life with tea," he said to himself, and he emptied the glass in one gulp. "General, you're thirsty," one of the officers said, and got him another glass. He drank that, too, in one gulp. The tea was sweet with lots of sugar, and tasted marvellous. Over the next half hour, as he wrote an outline of his family history and career, he waited for the poison to take effect. His father, a sergeant major in France's native colonial forces before the Second World War, had chosen his side for him in this war by sending him to a lycée in Can Tho and encouraging him to volunteer for the French-sponsored Officer Candidate School at Hue in 1950. Ba had never doubted the correctness of the choice. As he was led back to the bunker, he was still sure that he would soon be shot, but he felt better for the tea.

Ba spent his first year of reëducation with twenty-seven other Saigon generals in a large barracks room at a former ARVN training center at Hoc Mon. The solitary bit of good news Ba received before his transfer to Hoc Mon was that his wife and children had escaped by boat to Malaysia. His sister had told him; she had pleaded in tears with an N.V.A. guard at the Cu Chi base until he felt sorry for her and let her inside. His wife had taken his

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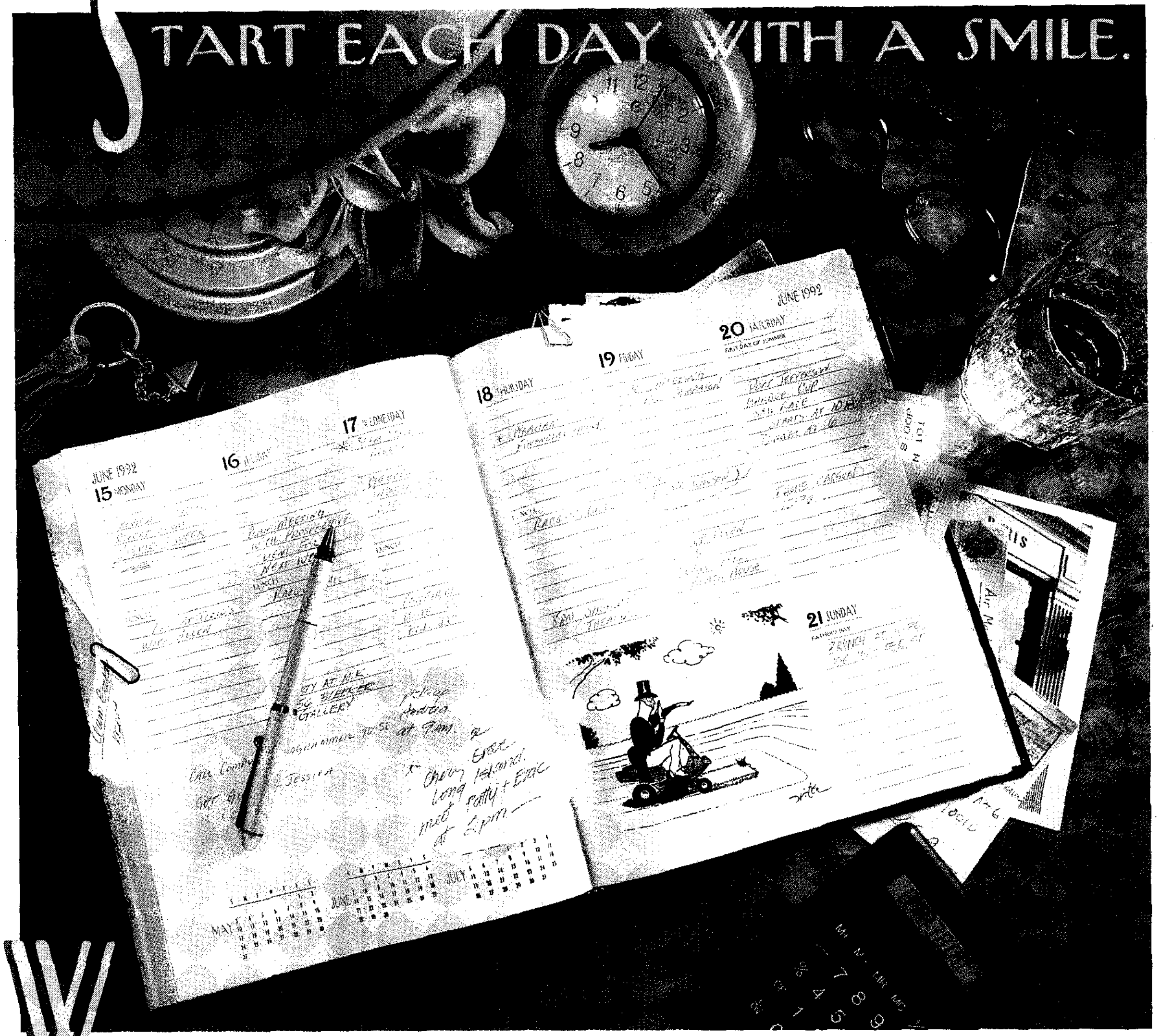

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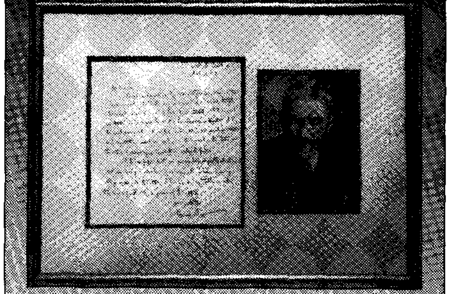

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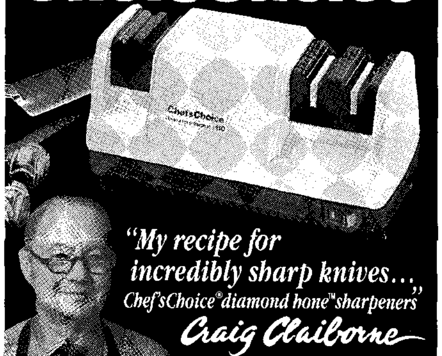
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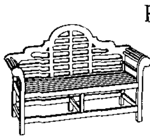

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advice to act on her own initiative, he learned. She heard a rumor the day after the fall of Saigon that he had been killed in the fighting at Cu Chi. The driver at his house remained loyal and stayed with her. Two days later, because there was no further word of Ba's fate, she loaded herself and the three children, her mother, and a brother, who was also an ARVN officer, and his wife into Ba's white jeep and had the driver take them to Go Cong, near the coast, southeast of the city. There she parted with all her jewelry and her cash savings, of several million piastres, to pay a fisherman to sail them to Malaysia. Part of the agreement was that the fisherman would return to Vietnam and smuggle Ba to Malaysia as well if it turned out that he was alive. The fisherman kept the bargain, in that he sailed back to Vietnam several months later, but he smuggled somebody else to Malaysia when he learned from Ba's sister that Ba was imprisoned. Ba's house was looted and then occupied by the families of Vietcong.

The Vietnamese Communists thought at first that they really could change minds. Ba and his twenty-seven fellow-generals at Hoc Mon were subjected to a carefully structured course taught by cadres, or instructors, who had prepared for their task. The generals were given neatly printed booklets to read on such subjects as colonialism and imperialism. They had to ponder what they read, write essays, and discuss their thoughts and conclusions in classes led by the cadres. If anyone's comments did not accurately reflect the printed texts and supplementary lectures by the cadres, the others were urged to criticize the delinquent student. The twenty-eight generals slept on cots in the same barracks room where they received their lessons, and were allowed out only for daily exercise breaks in an enclosed walkway and for trips to the toilet and the shower. Visits and letters were forbidden, but the cadres kept in touch with the generals' families and informed them when packets of medicine and other items, such as clothing, could be sent. At Tet, which for Vietnamese is Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year rolled into one, the cadres solicited taped messages with family news, and played each prisoner's message to him. Ba's sister made a tape for him. Some of the generals studied

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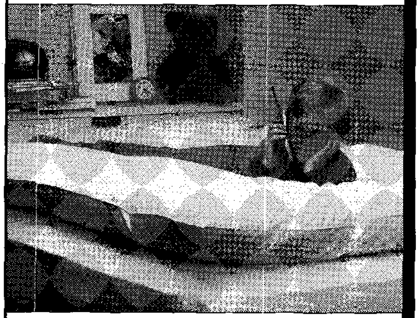

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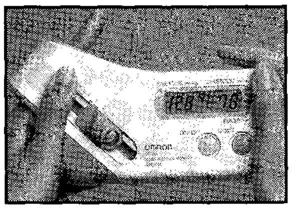

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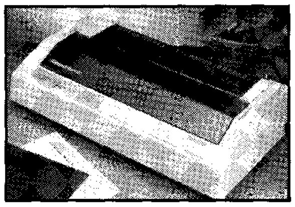

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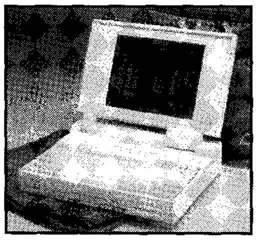

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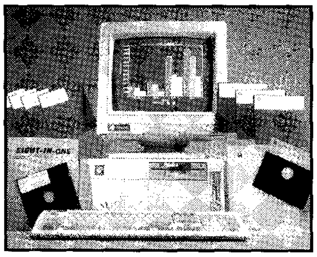

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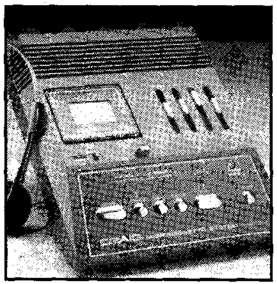

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hard, thinking that if they learned well they would be released. Ba, though he had lost his fear of being executed, was skeptical that academic excellence mattered; he assumed that he would be held for the rest of his life.

The fear returned suddenly, before dawn one day in mid-1976. The generals were roused at 4 A.M., made to pack their few belongings in a hurry, and marched outside and ordered to climb into the back of a canvas-covered Army truck. Some thought they would be driven to Cambodia and handed over to the Khmer Rouge for torture and gruesome execution. Instead, they were driven to Tan Son Nhut and flown to Yen Bai, northwest of Hanoi, for the next phase of their reëducation—two years of manual labor.

A hammer striking a sheet of steel hung from a wire—the camp bell—woke them in their mountain valley at five-thirty in the morning. Only the main sleeping barracks had been erected before their arrival. They had to build everything else from scratch, dig a well, and grow food for themselves by planting vegetable gardens in the valley and clearing fields for manioc on the surrounding slopes. Digging up the wild bamboo on the slopes with crowbars was gruelling work. The trees they also cleared had to be chopped into firewood for cooking and carried back down to the camp. Ba's knees ached from the strain of the heavy loads on the steep inclines. If anyone shirked by lightening his load, he would be singled out and criticized that night after the evening meal by the cadres and his fellow-prisoners. The beds they then lay down on were homemade bamboo platforms, each with a reed mat on top.

At first, they were fed adequately—three or four bowls of rice at noon and again in the evening, with *nuoc mam*, a fermented fish sauce that is a source of vitamins, and occasional vegetables and bits of meat. After a few months, the ration was cut to two bowls, twice a day (breakfast was just tea, which a rotating prisoner crew that rose at 4 A.M. prepared), and the prisoners went hungry, sometimes eating grass for vitamins, until they could harvest the manioc and their patches of onions, potatoes, cabbage, and water lilies. They had no fertilizer for the vegetables, and had to use their own night soil, collecting and spreading it themselves. Two of the generals died. One, a police general who was a diabetic, died slowly, from lack of insulin. The other, the former commander of the ARVN Special Forces, developed serious stomach trouble, was sent to a hospital for surgery, and died of a heart attack after his return to the camp.

Ba, who is physically sturdy and is the kind of outgoing person who craves something to do, was not adversely affected by the two years at Yen Bai. The winters in the North, when the temperature hangs in the forties and it rains constantly, were hard, because he was not accustomed to them. His sister, who had suspected that he might end up there, sent him a wool shirt while he was still at Hoc Mon, and a thermos to hold hot water for tea when he was cold or sick. The cadres also distributed old but serviceable Army field jackets with cotton padding, and some extra blankets.

The next phase of Ba's imprisonment, five years of monotonous confinement, was much more difficult to bear. It began in 1978, as the border fighting with the Khmer Rouge grew more intense and Vietnam's relations with China became increasingly embittered—difficulties that culminated in the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia at the end of the year, Deng Xiaoping's counter-invasion of the North, in 1979, and the tightening of the American economic embargo. The Communist leaders decided that their defeated enemies were a potential Fifth Column and had to be kept under close watch. The generals were trucked to Ha Dong, just west of Hanoi, and jailed in a compound of small brick buildings with barred windows which Ba thinks were originally built for captured American pilots. What started as a wartime measure acquired a bureaucratic inertia: years drifted by, and the experiment of changing minds degenerated into simple punishment.

The buildings had electric lights; the tile roofs didn't leak when it rained; and there were toilets nearby. Each of the generals was allowed to receive a six-and-a-half-pound package of food and medicine every third month. Ba's wife, who had settled in Las Vegas with their children after being granted

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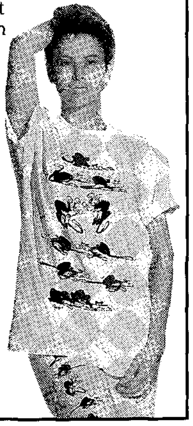

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a refugee visa to the United States, sent money faithfully to Saigon so that his package would be filled with dried soups and other dehydrated foods, and vitamins and antibiotics. Letters started to come, and a few of the generals (Ba was not one) were even permitted family visits. None of these comforts mattered. The men were held half a dozen to a brick building. Their only exercise, except for calisthenics, which some disciplined themselves to do inside, was walking to the toilet. "The worst thing about it was that we never knew when we would get out," Ba said. His weight dropped to a hundred and fifteen pounds from a hundred and sixty-one pounds, which was what he had weighed at the time he was captured.

In 1983, the generals were moved once more, this time to a large camp near Phu Ly, in the Red River Delta south of Hanoi, where several thousand other Saigon officers and officials were still being held in captivity. The generals now all slept in one building again. They refused to do the kind of work they had done at Yen Bai, saying that some of them were too old for hard labor. The cadres were initially angry but then agreed to let them perform light chores and grow their own gardens. Ba puttered in his garden, and also raised two chickens and a duck, for eggs. Others bred rabbits. On Sundays, the prisoners invited the cadres to songfests and picnics of chicken. A new commandant became fearful that the inmates were subverting their keepers, and forbade them to raise any more chickens, but he did not ban the purchase of chickens for immediate consumption, with money that the men received from their families during visits. Ba's sister came up to see him. The prisoners noticed that they had much better access to antibiotics, through their packages, than the cadres did, and gave them antibiotics for their sick children. Ba read a lot—the Hanoi newspapers, books of Chinese poetry, medical texts, an English-language Soviet magazine, and anything else he could get his hands on that was not Marxist-Leninist jargon.

In 1987 and 1988, with Nguyen Van Linh the new General Secretary of the Party, and Doi Moi well under way, the Phu Ly camp was gradually dissolved through large-scale releases. In mid-December of 1987, Ba was given

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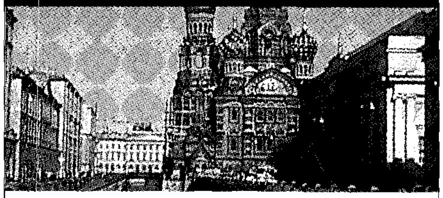

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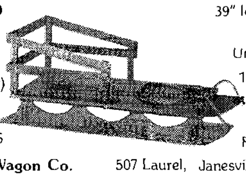

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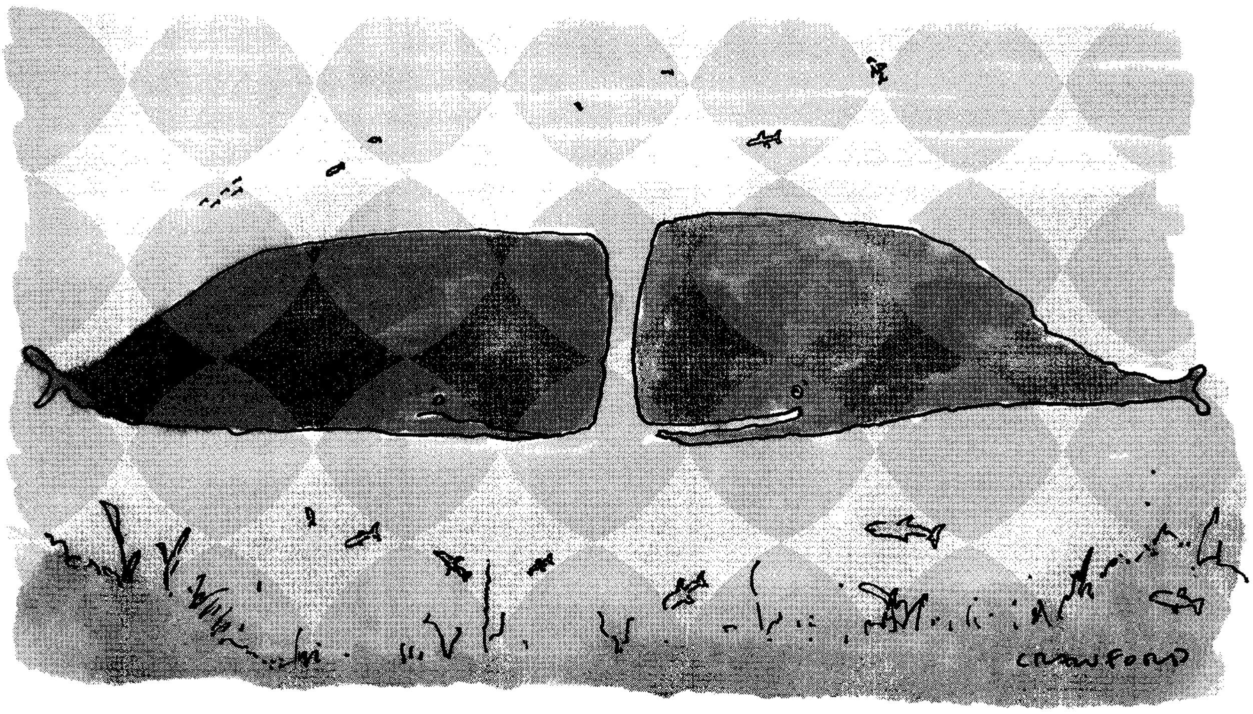

"Now that they dig our singing, let's wow them with a little tap."

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a train ticket from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. His sister nursed him back to health, taking him on trips to the mountain resort of Da Lat and on a sightseeing trip to Phnom Penh, which was then still occupied by the Vietnamese. By the time we saw him, in the summer of 1989, he was back up to a hundred and fifty pounds, and looked fit for his fifty-eight years, and spiffy in a navy-blue Lacoste shirt. A tennis racquet stood in a corner of the one-room apartment, and Ba told us he played frequently at what once had been Saigon's exclusive Cercle Sportif. The place was declared a public recreation center after 1975, and, like much else in a country that lacks funds for public facilities, was now dirty and run-down, but Ba joked that the tennis courts still had nets. He had a minor eye problem, amenable to surgery, and was going to do something about it after he got to the United States. He was waiting for the authorities in Hanoi to grant him an exit permit. His name was already on a list of former reëducation-camp prisoners who were acceptable to the United States government.

Not long after Ba's release and return to Ho Chi Minh City, a visiting American television correspondent asked to interview a prominent veteran of the camps. The Ho Chi Minh City press office volunteered Ba. "What am I supposed to say?" Ba asked a couple of Vietnamese security officers who showed up at the interview, and they replied, "Say what you think." The reporter asked Ba if he had been reëducated during his twelve years and eight months of incarceration. "Still not now and never will be a Communist," Ba replied. Had he been well treated? "Well, it was still a prison—not an R.-and-R. camp," Ba said.

As Ba told us his story in the crowded, grubby apartment, one of his sister's grandchildren, feverish and vomiting, whimpered in the curtained-off sleeping area. We asked him if he regretted his decision to stay until the end. A number of his fellow-generals had deserted their troops and run just before the collapse, and most of those who were with Ba in captivity had been caught because they missed an American evacuation helicopter on the last day. "I'm glad I didn't run away in 1975," Ba said. "A real soldier doesn't run away." On January 19, 1990, Ly Tong Ba boarded a plane at Tan Son Nhut, and, after a brief stay at the immigration-processing center in Bangkok, he joined his family in Las Vegas.

ON January 2, 1963, at a hamlet called Ap Bac, in the Mekong Delta, where Ba was then a captain commanding a company of armored personnel carriers, the Vietcong had also not run away. For the first time in the war, the elusive guerrillas had stood their ground, and, though they were outnumbered four to one, three hundred and fifty of them had fought all day against Saigon troops equipped with artillery and armor and supported by American helicopters and fighter-bombers. With just grenades and the captured rifles, machine guns, and other infantry arms they held in their hands, the Vietcong killed and wounded two hundred of their opponents, including three Americans who died; shot down five helicopters; and stopped Ba's ten-ton armored personnel carriers despite the lack of a single anti-tank weapon. The battle was a turning point. From that day forward, the "raggedy-ass little bastards," as the American generals had referred to them, grew into a powerful army, and by 1965 it was on the verge of total victory in the South, forcing Lyndon Johnson to intervene with the regular armed forces of the United States in order to safeguard Washington's protégés in Saigon. There is a billboard now where a dirt road leading to the battleground turns off the hard-top of the main Delta highway. The billboard shows a helicopter in flames, an armored personnel carrier blowing up, and a Saigon parachute battalion descending in a fruitless attempt at rescue—a reasonable, if not entirely accurate,

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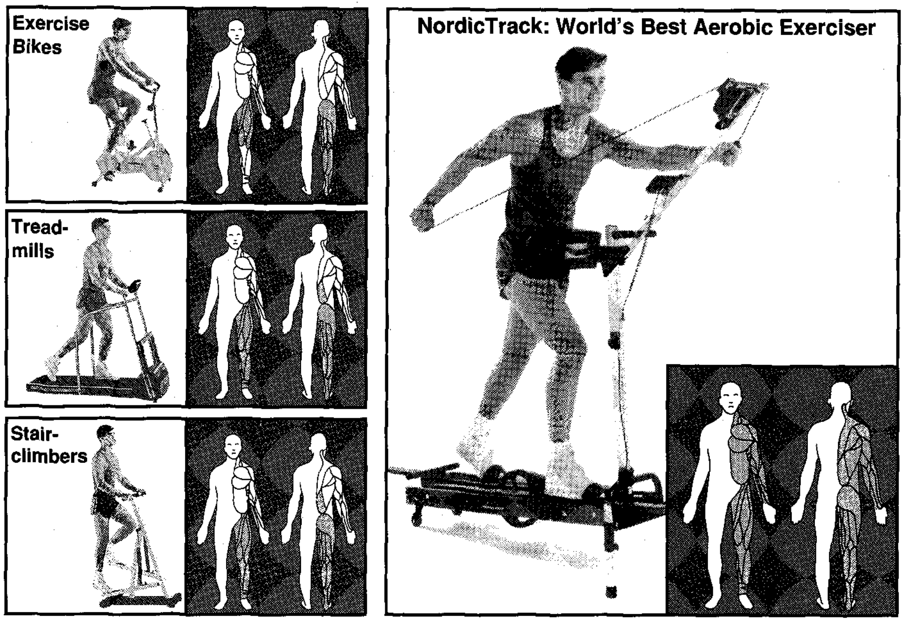

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portrayal of the violence that day.

Like Ben Suc, Ap Bac and four neighboring hamlets in the village of Tan Phu had to be rebuilt by the inhabitants, who were forced to leave because of subsequent fighting during the nineteen-sixties and early seventies and who returned in 1975. What they found on their return was charred houses and brush-grown rice fields—the heritage that the American war bequeathed to so much of the South Vietnamese countryside. The long process of clearing and rebuilding, with the attendant horror of people being killed and wounded by unexploded grenades and other ordnance, was set back by a severe typhoon that struck the area in 1978. Among the casualties were virtually all of the newly planted fruit trees, which were blown away or submerged in the flooding.

In contrast to our visit to Ben Suc, where no one was waiting for us, we visited Ap Bac by prearrangement, and an assemblage of village officials, veterans, and ever-inquisitive Vietnamese children greeted us at Tan Phu's new council house, which was finally completed in 1985. The village is run, as Ben Suc is, by those who resisted. Tran Van Hy, who is the chairman of the village People's Committee, lost his father, a sister, and a nephew during the battle. They were killed by shrapnel from a bomb or an artillery shell while hiding in a pile of straw. Two other nephews, who were with them, were wounded. Hy was fifteen at the time, and ran messages for the guerrillas. During the chaos, he had to bury his father and his sister in a neighboring village, and wasn't able to inter their remains in the family graveyard until after 1975. Le Van Vy, now the Party Secretary of the village, was a guerrilla youth leader in the hamlet just above Ap Bac. He distributed food and ammunition to the fighters and helped carry away the wounded. Pinned to a Vietnamese flag on one of the walls of the council house were three important decorations that the village had been awarded by the national government. Above the flag was a portrait of Ho Chi Minh, and in front of it stood a vase of flowers.

Valor has not brought material reward. There isn't enough land to go around, and the land isn't as productive as it ought to be. The village has some five thousand inhabitants, in a thousand and five families, but only

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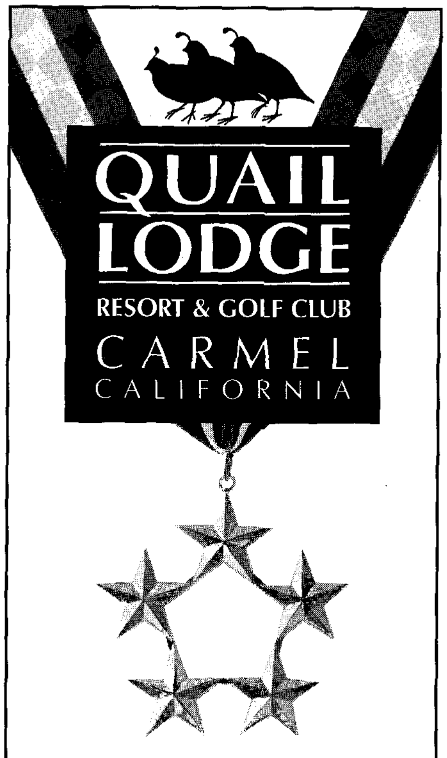
thirteen hundred and nine acres of riceland and four hundred and twenty-seven acres of less fertile ground that is suitable for vegetables and fruit trees. Vy explained that much of Tan Phu's riceland, unlike the land held by more fortunate neighboring villages, was too high for easy flooding, and had a salinity problem as well. The farmers are also caught in the classic squeeze between the price of rice, which has not risen, and the price of the manufactured commodities they need in order to live. Even though they have received a far greater return on the rice they grow since they were given back their land under Doi Moi, they can't grow enough to close the gap.

All the children now attend primary school, and the majority of them continue through the eighth grade in the village's lower secondary school, but only a few families can afford to let their children complete secondary education at the higher school, in the nearby district town of Cai Lay, and just one young man from the village was attending a university, in Can Tho.

We walked from the council house across the rice fields toward Ap Bac. Twenty-six years earlier, many of the rice fields had been bordered by dense tree lines, in the typical pattern of the Delta. The lines of trees were not an accident. They had been planted by the farmers on the stream banks and on dikes built up like levees along the irrigation ditches and canals, because the trees were part of the cycle that sustained life—groves of banana and coconut, orchards of other fruit, clumps of bamboo and water palm, and hardwood trees grown to pole height for construction. The vegetation around the hamlet and among the houses within it had also been profuse, with every bit of ground put to some use.

Now the landscape was more open. The tree lines that one could see in the distance were sparse compared with their predecessors. Around the hamlet itself, too, the vegetation was less dense than it had been. A lot of the irrigation ditches had been restored, but most of the leveelike dikes that had edged them were gone, including a large dike in front of Ap Bac, where the Vietcong had fought from foxholes concealed under the trees that flourished there on that day. The change helped to explain why the land was less productive now,



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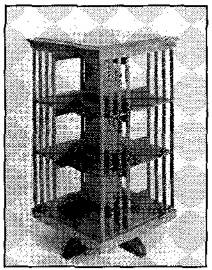

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and twice the number of people to feed naturally compounded the problem. The villagers of Tan Phu are still at the beginning of a long process of reconstruction, and perhaps not even they fully remember what has been lost. The elaborate infrastructure of wet-rice culture takes generations of thoughtful labor to build. Twenty-six years before, there had been no difficulty in flooding the ricelands of Ap Bac and the other hamlets of the village. The farmers could keep their fields flooded all year round then, through the intricate irrigation system they had created. The battle had occurred at the height of the dry season, and yet the fields had been full of water.

Although the dike was gone, the villagers had restored the big irrigation ditch in front of Ap Bac. It was full of water, and the footbridge across it was a single log. Vietnamese country folk traverse one-log bridges handily, but we were intimidated. A middle-aged woman in a turban called out "No sweat!" in vintage American military slang, dragged up a second log, and threw it across beside the first one, to give us better footing. Once we were across, the woman, Nguyen Thi Bay, told us that she had lived in Saigon until 1975, and then had returned to Ap Bac, her native hamlet, to try to earn a livelihood. She was the widow of an ARVN soldier who had been killed during the war. Because her marriage had placed her on the wrong side, she had been given no land, and was working as an agricultural laborer for other families. She was cheerful, despite the lot that life had dealt her, and put her arm around a nine-year-old girl, whom she introduced as her daughter.

Ho Chua, a bearded eighty-year-old farmer, came out of the hamlet carrying a walking staff that he didn't seem to need and smoking a cigarette of pungent homegrown tobacco hand-rolled in pink paper. He pointed toward the section of rice fields just outside Ap Bac, and recounted how three of the five American helicopters had been downed right there. Chua said he remembered the precise positions of the forlorn flying machines, because four Americans had taken over his house the day after the battle and used it as living quarters for several days while they tried to repair the aircraft. (Two of the helicopters were flown out after repair; the third had

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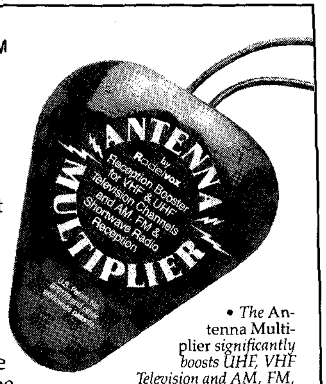
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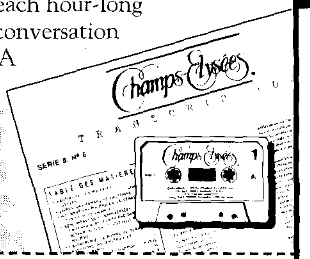

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The secret Vietcong account of the 1963 battle, captured in an ambush a couple of months afterward, said that the critical moment had come when Ly Tong Ba's ten-ton armored personnel carriers were about to mount the dike in front of Ap Bac and overwhelm the guerrillas. A squad leader named Dung, the account said, had leaped from the protection of his foxhole, stood on the top of the dike in full view of the machine gunners on the carriers, and hurled a grenade at one of the vehicles. The rest of his squad and other guerrillas along the foxhole line had been inspired by his example. They, too, had leaped up and flung grenades, breaking the nerve of Ba's carrier crews with the blasts and shrapnel, and repulsing the armored machines as the terrified drivers backed away. That night, when the Vietcong regulars withdrew to the safety of their jungle base under the cover of darkness, Dung was not with them. He had been killed by an air strike or an artillery barrage while his company was pulling back through the hamlet. The report expressed regret that his body could not be retrieved in the darkness and carried to the battalion base for burial with honor. "Comrade Dung could not come," the Vietcong account had said.

We asked Phan Cong Chau, one of three older farmer-veterans who had assisted the regulars as hamlet guerrillas during the battle—Chau had managed to capture two carbines—if he knew anything about Dung. Chau said that Dung was a squad leader who had sprung up on the dike to stop the armored carriers with a grenade. He knew, he said, because he had helped to bury three men killed in the battle—Dung and two members of his squad. "They called his squad the Iron Squad," Chau said. When the farmers buried the men, they marked the graves, and so were able to find them when they returned in 1975, Chau said, and the villagers had then made three concrete headstones. The graves were behind the big irrigation ditch in front of the hamlet, looking out over the rice paddies in the direction the enemy had come from. Dung and his two companions were not natives of the village, Chau explained. Two were from two other districts in the province and one was from the province of Ben Tre, across the Tien Giang River, farther south. Their families had come to Ap Bac after the war and wanted to disinter the remains and rebury them in the men's home villages. Chau said that the families had been persuaded to leave the three men where they had fallen. He and the other farmers wanted to show gratitude to these men who had died for the village, Chau said, and had promised to tend the graves with care.

BUFFALO and cows and goats graze through the brush among the thousands of graves in the ARVN cemetery off the Bien Hoa Highway, not far from Ho Chi Minh City, knocking over a tombstone here and there as they browse. The place was meant to be the former Saigon government's equivalent of Arlington National Cemetery. It was begun in the late nineteen-sixties, when, under Nixon's Vietnamization program to shift the onus of combat to the Saigon forces, the smaller cemeteries could no longer hold the number of dead. In 1972, for example, thirty-nine thousand Saigon soldiers died. Year after year, the coffins were trundled in, but at the time of the debacle in 1975 the laying out of the cemetery itself and the construction of a towering central monument remained unfinished.

A toothless old man in a conical straw hat who was guarding several grazing buffalo said that a couple of people came every day to visit a grave or to search for one, and that at Tet families cut the brush and cleared away the weeds around the burial places of loved ones. There was no one there visiting a grave the afternoon we were there: just the old man; some boys, who were watching other buffalo, cows, and goats; and a group of villagers from a nearby hamlet, who were digging up stones from the roadbeds through the cemetery to sell for house foundations. Villagers were also tending some of the graves; they said that the families paid them to do it. Other graves were now weed-filled holes in the ground, because the families had removed the remains for reburial elsewhere. Chance and the elements were the only attention that most of the graves were getting. Headstones were astray on the ground, jarred loose by the leg of one foraging beast, kicked away by the hoof of another. The ARVN had shrouded the graves of its dead with long concrete covers, made like the tops of ancient sarcophagi. Many of these were askew, tilted sidewise because the earth underneath had sunk over the years. In one section of the cemetery, where the livestock had not grazed, the brush was so high that it was beginning to hide the burial places.

From the high ground in the middle of the cemetery, where the concrete skeleton of the unfinished central monument stands, one can look back down the main avenue, lined with eucalyptus trees, and see a pagoda on a hill at the other end. The pagoda was completed before 1975. It is a shrine to the dead. Six sets of steps leading up to it are crumbling. Inside the pagoda is a large memorial tablet, shaped like the stone memorials to feudal mandarins in the ancient Temple of Literature in Hanoi, and in front of the tablet is a symbolic grave. "The Fatherland Will Always Be Grateful" ("*To Quoc Ghi On*"), the words on the tablet say. The tablet has been defaced. The glazed ceremonial tiles that once covered the symbolic grave have been stripped away by scavengers. Nothing is left but brick and mortar. The decorative tiles are also gone from the walls and the ceiling of the pagoda, and have been replaced by obscene graffiti that Vietnamese teenagers like to scrawl.

At Ap Bac, the graves of Dung and his two comrades are cared for by those whose rice fields they fought for. On the road to Ben Suc is a cemetery where thousands who died on the Communist side in Cu Chi District rest. Brush does not grow amid their graves. No one accepts responsibility for the graves of the ARVN soldiers near Ho Chi Minh City. Misguided men in Washington and venal men in Saigon used these soldiers badly in life. In death, they are discarded. Our guide Tien was saddened by the place. "This should not happen to anyone," he said.

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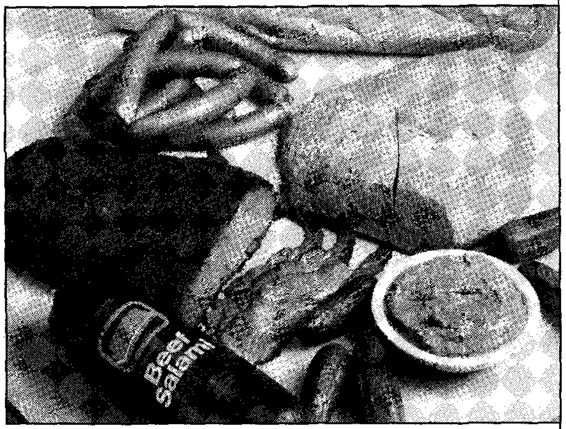

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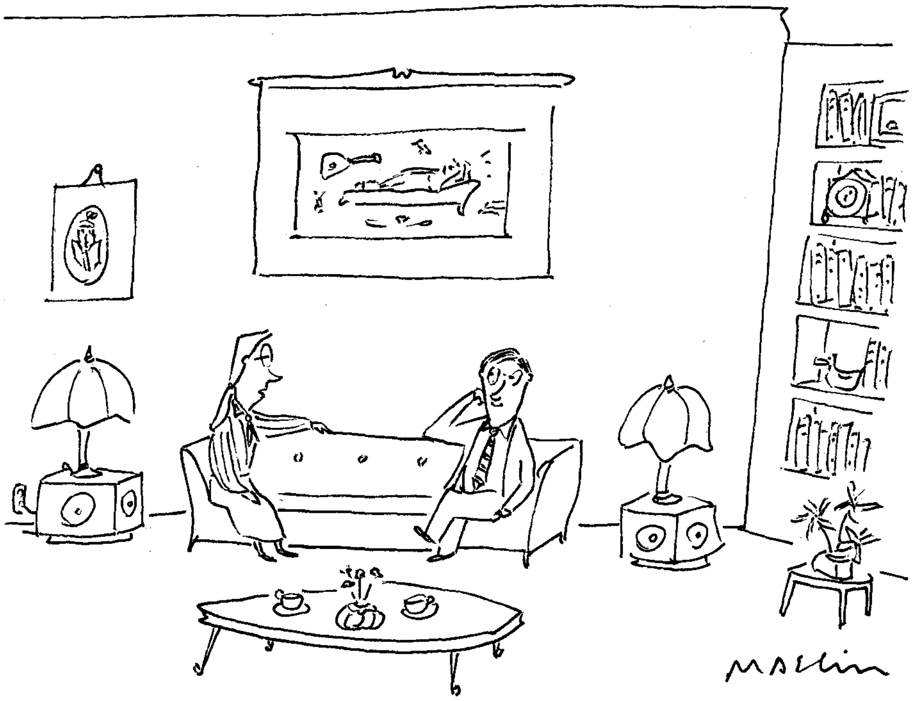
True Believers

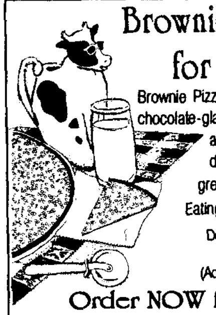
THE title of Bruce Beresford's unusual and absorbing new film, "Black Robe," refers to the long cassocks worn by Jesuit missionaries in North America in the seventeenth century. The zealous priests were part of the early days of French exploration in the New World; while explorers like Champlain plunged into the wilderness, claimed land, and established settlements, the Jesuits who travelled alongside them were out to claim the souls of the Algonquian, Huron, and Iroquois Indians who inhabited that wilderness. The priests considered these people savage and godless, and the Indians called the missionaries "Blackrobes"—an ominous, mythic-sounding name for figures who were of all the white intruders surely the most disturbing and the least comprehensible. "Black Robe," which is based on Brian Moore's 1985 novel of that name (Moore himself did the screenplay), is a culture-clash drama in which the most important conflicts take place in the realm of the spirit. The hero is a pale and excruciatingly pious young Jesuit called Father Laforgue (Lothaire Bluteau), who sets out from the Quebec settlement on a journey up the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. His destination is a remote mission among the Hurons. Father Jerome, the Jesuit in charge there, hasn't been heard from for too long, and his superiors in Quebec are worried. Laforgue is to find out what's going on; it's understood that he will take over the mission if Father Jerome is dead.

As Laforgue heads upriver with a reluctant escort of Algonquians, we begin to understand why the Indians and the priests are so fearful and suspicious of each other. The differences between Laforgue and the Algonquian chief, Chomina (August Schellenberg), aren't matters of social organization or moral codes. The world views of Laforgue and Chomina are so radically opposed that at times the two men seem unable even to acknowledge each other as human. The priest and the Indian, making their way together to the distant mission, are sharing experience in only the most literal, limited sense. We feel at every moment that Laforgue and Chomina aren't seeing or hearing the same things—that they aren't living the same history. These characters don't engage in philosophical debates; there's nothing to talk about. Most stories of this sort are framed so that the characters can "learn" from each other: people from different cultures wind up looking into each other's eyes and thinking, These people have something good. Often, though, this cross-cultural understanding seems to have been accomplished in a facile way—by treating the features of complex, integrated cultures as if they were merely life-style choices. "Black Robe" offers no easy way out of the spiritual impasse between the Jesuits and the Indians, and the characters are presented without concessions to twentieth-century sensibilities. Laforgue and Chomina are as alien to us as they are to each other.



"I'm glad to hear you're happy, Charles—that accounts for the smile."

Laforgue is the strangest, most difficult hero in recent movies. Looking at him, you do not think of a modern Jesuit—not the fiendishly ingenious intellectuals who befuddle students in American high schools and universities, and not the liberation-theology activists who work in the Third World. The Jesuit in "Black Robe" is an old-fashioned true believer. He prays, he reads Scripture, he struggles to resist fleshly temptations; he lives only to serve the one true God of Catholicism. For him, the material world is nothing, an illusion: all nature is just the antechamber to Heaven, and the body is the cell in which the soul counts the days until its release. Aspiring to a state of pure, incorporeal spirituality, Laforgue often seems inhuman, lifeless, spectral. He's a spooky guy, and it's easy to see why the Indians he means to convert find his values so resistible; many of them think he's a demon. Laforgue, the Father from another planet, is so bizarre that any other world view should, by contrast, look pretty attractive. Chomina and the rest of the Algonquians do at least live by a philosophy that allows for sensual pleasure; they don't deny the reality of the physical world or reduce day-to-day existence to the status of diligent, joyless preparation for a blissful afterlife. Their vision of nature is animistic—the spirits of the dead speak through birds and animals and rivers and trees—and they believe in the truth of dreams. The movie's portrayal of the Indians' mysticism is straightforward, unromanticized; it has an anthropological detachment. The signs and portents that come to Chomina are always ambiguous and often unreliable: disturbed by



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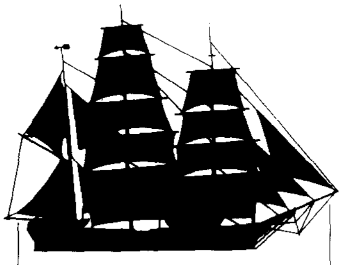

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dream images, he consults his wife and his friends and a shaman (a nasty-spirited dwarf) for their interpretations, and the ideas that they give him are confusing and contradictory. He's never quite sure how he should act on his visions. If the priest's world seems thin and insubstantial, the Indian's is perhaps too rich; Chomina often appears to be wandering uncertainly through a blizzard of meanings.

Moore and Beresford show extraordinary respect for the stubborn, almost impenetrable otherness of their historical characters. "Black Robe" dares to build a story around people whom contemporary audiences couldn't possibly identify with. This is a movie we have to feel our way into—tentatively, gradually—and it accumulates emotional force as it goes along. It's an adventure story in the truest sense: the filmmakers lead us into unknown territory, and keep pushing us farther and farther on, until, by the end, we find ourselves deep in the wilderness of the seventeenth-century consciousness. We're not entirely at home there, but at least we're able to figure out where we are—to recognize some of the moral and philosophical coördinates of this strange new world. Despite the movie's rigor, it never feels austere or merely academic. The story has plenty of action, in the James Fenimore Cooper manner—ambushes, escapes, tense confrontations. Even when nothing dramatic is happening, the movie is suspenseful: we're constantly aware of danger—and aware, too, that the Huron mission at the end of the journey might be the scene of an appalling catastrophe. And the late-autumn and winter landscapes in which the action is set are piercingly lovely: the river is broad and sinuous, and it cuts through tree-covered mountains; the skies have the mysterious dull-gray beauty of pewter; and the snow, when it comes, gives a kind of radiance to everything. Beresford and his cinematographer, Peter James, have provided "Black Robe" with a voluptuous surface, and the movie's visual splendor is more than decoration. These views of natural phenomena have a clarity that's almost unreal: paradoxically, they seem to justify both the Indians' pantheism and the Jesuits' sense of the world as illusion. Beresford ("Driving Miss Daisy," "Mister Johnson") puts his characteristic pictorialism to good use here. "Black Robe" has real sweep, and its beauties are expres-

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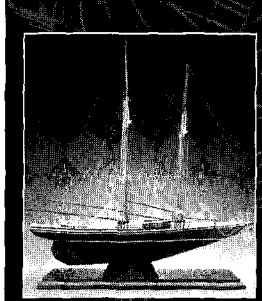

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sive; this is the best filmmaking he has ever done.

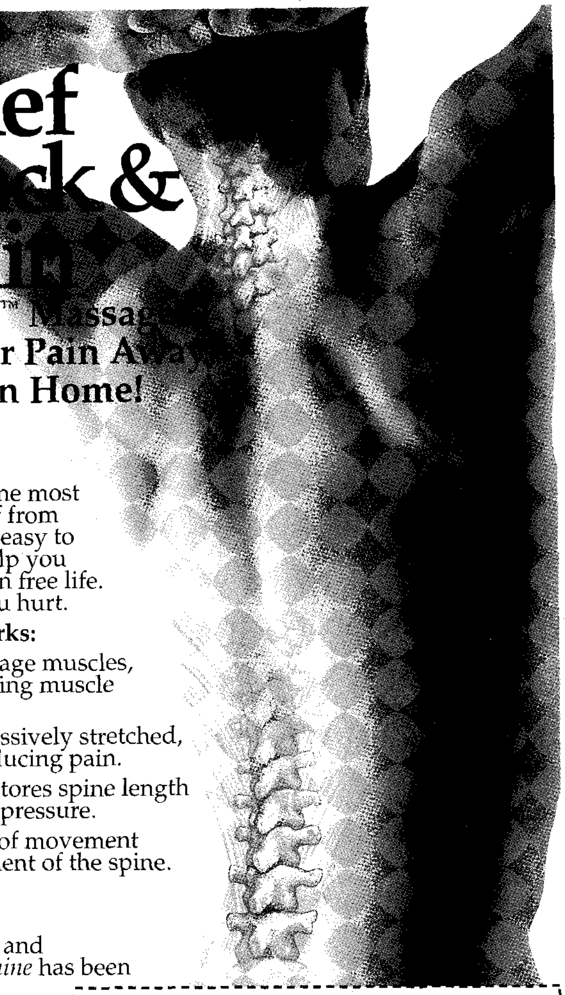
By the end of the picture, Moore and Beresford have accustomed us to the peculiar terms in which the characters understand their lives. Without ever feeling that Laforgue or Chomina or any of the other people on the screen are "just like us," we begin, nonetheless, to respond to their struggles wholeheartedly. The intensity of their beliefs becomes very moving, and the irreconcilable disparity between the Blackrobes' philosophy and the Indians' becomes unbearably sad. In the movie's greatest scene, near the end, Laforgue stands over a dying Algonquian and searches for something to say to him. The priest tries to bless the old Indian, to tell him "My God loves you," and the dying man's daughter is outraged. It's a complex, disorienting moment. In a sense, the blessing is obscenely irrelevant: it's no solace to the Algonquian, who doesn't believe in the Jesuit's God and, for that matter, isn't entirely sure that Laforgue isn't some kind of sorcerer. The gesture can be seen, too, as a confirmation of the spiritual colonialism of missionary activity—the impulse to collect souls the way trappers bag pelts. (The Jesuits were keen on baptizing dying Indian babies and sending their souls straight to Heaven.) And yet Laforgue's awkward words are touching; we sense that they come from a genuine desire to do good and a real affection for the dying man. The priest has no choice but to speak, and no other way of expressing himself fully, and his absurd invocation of his God is somehow an act of bravery: he has to trust that the Algonquian will hear honest feelings rather than meaningless words.

"Black Robe" moves on a steady, powerful flow of ideas and emotions. Moore's superbly intelligent script and Beresford's confident direction carry us past the movie's one serious weakness, which is Lothaire Bluteau's enervated performance as Laforgue. Fortunately, August Schellenberg's Chomina is magnificent, and the movie is so strongly conceived that its themes come through despite Bluteau's passivity. (Repressed characters should look as if they might once have had some impulse vital enough to be worth repressing.) In every other respect, the picture is a triumph. "Black Robe" isn't about anything so simple as lost innocence, but its freshness gives us an intimation of how audiences must have responded when movies were a new world: it stirs in us a sense of discovery.

"HOMICIDE," written and directed by David Mamet, is a genre picture with delusions of grandeur. It's an urban cop thriller dressed up as a profound psychological drama. The protagonist, a Jewish homicide detective named Bobby Gold (Joe Mantegna), doesn't appear to be the usual American action-movie hero; he's a brooder, not a trigger-happy avenger, and he's prone to doubts and scruples about his cases. (Gold will perhaps seem less unconventional to the long-suffering audiences of French crime movies, in which the police detective is always a weary middle-aged humanist in the Maigret mold and is played by someone like Philippe Noiret.) The plot is designed to give this decent and fairly sensitive regular guy a whopping existential crisis. As the movie sets things up, Gold's sense of himself depends almost entirely on his professionalism: he's a good cop and he's respected and liked by his colleagues. But Mamet quickly begins chipping away at his hero's self-image. Near the start, an angry black city official calls Gold a kike, and soon thereafter the detective becomes involved in a case that forces him to confront his Jewishness. An old Jewish shopkeeper in a black neighborhood is found murdered in her store, and Gold happens to be driving by the crime scene and winds up in charge of the investigation. This case, which he initially considers trivial and uninteresting, takes up more and more of his time as it goes on. The murdered woman's family is convinced that she was the victim not of a street crime but of an anti-Semitic conspiracy. Gold reacts to this theory with appropriate skepticism, and the relatives, who are wealthy and rather arrogant, start to treat him like a traitor to his people. If he were a real Jew, they give him to understand, he would know that their fears are more than paranoid fantasies, that the threat of violence against them—even of extermination—is constant and real. The family members often speak Yiddish among themselves, excluding Gold as if he were just another Gentile. They make this assimilated Jew feel like a worm.

The behavior of the victim's relatives seems more rude than anything else, but their scorn has an effect on the hero. Unsettled, he presses on with the investigation and discovers that there *is* a conspiracy. His sense of ethnic identity, a sleeping tiger, awakens. A clandestine Jewish-defense organization asks for Gold's help, and before long he is blowing up the printing press of an Aryan-supremacist group—a mission that makes him late for an important stakeout. This is, to say the least, a wild, improbable plot. It's the sort of story that cries out for the loud, lurid, exploitive style of a B-movie master like Samuel Fuller ("Shock Corridor," "Pickup on South Street"). In Fuller's movies, there's no hypocrisy about "serious" contemporary social themes: the topical issues serve only to heighten the movies' violent sensationalism. Mamet, however, dramatizes this gamy material with tremendous solemnity. The funereal pace and the melancholy, reflective tone seem intended to mask the story's essential recklessness and irresponsibility, and perhaps also to conceal the trite cop-movie mechanics of its construction. The ethnic-identity motif is, after all, just a variant of one of the genre's most familiar strategies: the hero must be seen to have a *personal* stake in his case—to be willing, therefore, to go beyond his customary professional procedure and consequently to jack up the action into the audience-stimulating range of frenzied melodrama. Usually, this kind of movie (or TV show) gives its hero some simple motivation: his wife or his girlfriend is threatened; he is at odds with his superiors and has "something to prove" in his handling of the case; or the present situation reminds him of a past failure—say, a mistake that got his partner killed. Mamet is too smart to resort to corny tropes like those: he uses the controversial, hot-button issue of cultural identity instead, and as a result the movie gives off a pungent odor of opportunism. It's hard to believe that Mamet thought he could do justice to this complex, sensitive, potentially inflammatory theme in the context of a cop movie—a genre that treats everything as an occasion for blood and hysteria. "Homicide," for all its pretensions to significance, is as alienating and depressing as the local news. Mamet turns ethnic and racial differences into cheap thrills.

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY



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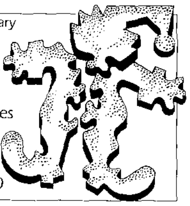

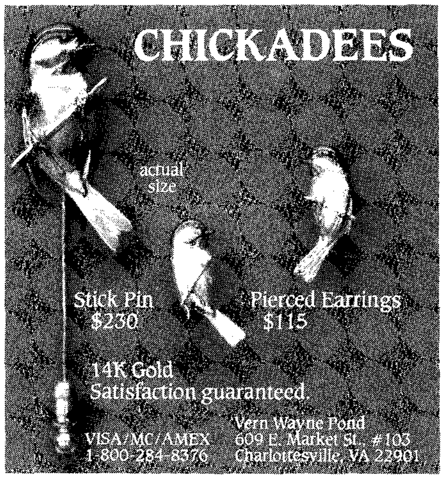

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MUSICAL EVENTS

Concert-Hall Drama

THE Boston Symphony's production of Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades" in Carnegie Hall last month was very successful. Seiji Ozawa conducted. The director was David Kneuss, and the designers were John Michael Deegan and Sarah G. Conly—the trio that at Tanglewood and in Boston's Symphony Hall has specialized in presenting operas in concert with varying degrees of scenic realization. This "Queen of Spades" was far more than "semi-staged": it was a production as dramatic as many shows that we see in regular opera houses. Above and behind the orchestra, a stage had been erected, and there the principals acted and sang, accompanied at times by a chorus of eight women. Furniture (as in a Wieland Wagner production) was reduced to essentials: a bench, a piano, a chair, a gaming table. The women wore costumes, and the men wore evening dress, Prince Yeletsky being distinguished by a sash of nobility. On large screens that framed the stage and spanned the platform from side to side, the seven settings of the action were projected. The faces of the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, ranged behind the screens, became visible through them from time to time—gnomic attendants on the personal drama. The casino scene was especially effective: a suggestion of gambling rooms reaching into the distance while the principals gathered round the onstage table.

There was an international cast; the event doubled as an RCA recording session. Mirella Freni, the Lisa, has become the foremost interpreter of Tchaikovsky's Tatiana and Lisa; last year she sang Lisa at La Scala and at Tanglewood (Mr. Ozawa conducting), and next year she sings the role in St. Petersburg. Although she made her début in 1955, she still looks and still (except in the loudest passages) sounds marvellously young, fresh, and vulnerable. When she moved into the heavier repertory, she acquired force at the expense of her early gentleness and charm of timbre, but her loud singing has never been forced, strident, or impure. The Hermann was Vladimir Atlantov, who has a ringing Otello voice of fine quality but does tend to shout. Maureen Forrester was a distinguished Countess. Sergei Leiferkus, baritone unparalleled, was the Tomsky; one wished that the role were larger (and that the second-act intermezzo, in which Tomsky plays Plutus, had not been omitted), for in Mr. Leiferkus's command of every vocal resource, in his arrestingly shaped delivery of every phrase—in his vividness, his sheer mastery—the great days of Imperial Russian singing seem to return. The sustained high F toward the end of Tomsky's song in the last scene was attacked softly, was swelled smoothly into a magnificent, joyful note, was left beautifully. Beside Mr. Leiferkus, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, a suave Yeletsky, seemed somewhat pale and callow. The balance between the singers and the orchestra was ideal. Mr. Ozawa conducted with a delicate care for colors and expression; I have never admired him more.

NO REGRETS
W Miller

THE day before, in Avery Fisher Hall, the Boston Symphony, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and Mr. Ozawa accompanied a screening of Eisenstein's film "Alexander Nevsky" (1938). The prints in circulation tend to be scratchy, both visually and musically. This was a crisp, impeccable new print, made from the nitrate negative, which survives in Moscow. In 1938, we are told, Prokofiev's stirring music for the film was rehearsed and recorded in haste, with only a small studio orchestra (though the composer made creative use of microphone distortion to lend a deliberately brutal tone to the fanfares of the invading Teutons). Now William D. Brohn has reconstructed and rescored the music, for full orchestra, using the composer's full-orchestra "Alexander Nevsky" cantata as his guide. But music and imagery were less happily matched than in "The Queen of Spades." Above a visible orchestra (and a spotlit mezzo-soprano, Janis Taylor, in the searching-the-battlefield sequence) a screen was suspended, too small to form a fourth wall opening out onto Eisenstein's scenes. The music was enhanced, the film diminished. What we need is the fine new print provided with a fine new musical soundtrack.

"L'ELISIR D'AMORE" reached the Metropolitan Opera in 1904, with Sembrich, Caruso, and Scotti, and at roughly thirty-year intervals there have been new productions: in 1930, in 1960, and again last month. The previous production, which was rather too hard and bright for Donizetti's touching comedy, but serviceable, has been replaced by an ugly new one, unhelpful to the piece and, with its steep stairs, unhelpful to the singers. John Copley directed, and Beni Montresor designed, largely in yellow and reds. Nemorino, the hero of "Elisir," ought to be a surefire role: Gigli, Tito Schipa, Ferruccio Tagliavini, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Carlo Bergonzi sang it with distinction late into their careers and knew how to be charming, rueful, funny, and limpid of tone; Alfredo Kraus, who sang it at the Met in 1968, returns to it later this season. Luciano Pavarotti may count Nemorino among his favorite roles, but he coarsens it. On the first night of the new production, there were five or six good touches in his performance—moments when note melted into note, or a word was winningly uttered—but it is many years since he even aimed at the charm and grace that are needed. He should restudy and refine his interpretation with some nice Donizetti stylist. Kathleen Battle offered a dainty, unimpetuous Adina. (When she did open out generously at last, in "Prendi, per me sei libero," Mr. Pavarotti's pop-eyed reaction to a ringing high note of hers made the audience laugh. But Mr. Copley did at least avoid the hilarity that an insistence on the stage direction at the end of the aria—Nemorino "flings himself at Adina's feet"—would have caused.) Juan Pons was a blunt, boring Belcore. Enzo Dara, a reliable buffo, was billed as Dulcamara, but he fell ill, and his cover was a cipher. Marcello Panni conducted without poise, grace, or sentiment.

"ALESSANDRO" (1726) was the first of five operas that Handel composed for the rival prima donnas Cuzzoni and Faustina. As a subject he chose Alexander the Great's susceptibility to the attractions of both the Scythian princess Lisaura, who was played by Cuzzoni, and the Sogdanian captive Roxana, who was played by Faustina. (Roxana is history, the librettist notes in his preface, whereas Lisaura is fabulous.) He took care to give the divas equal opportunity in every vein. They are introduced in a recitative *a due* whose final couplet is "Thus Souls discording, if in Love they be, Dread like Misfortunes, and in Fears agree." Each has six arias, two in each act, running the range from the poignant to the brilliant. In Act I, they sing a duet in which Handel allots the top line now to one, now to the other. In Act II, each has a simile aria. Roxana, in music designed to display Faustina's rapidity and brilliance of utterance, sings:

> To her little Cage of Gold
> Oft some Singing-Bird, that flies
> Fleet to find its native Skies,
> We returning back behold.

Lisaura's next aria begins:

> If a Doe, that's in the Toils,
> Should, by Chance, her Freedom gain,
> She'll ne'er turn, nor trust again
> To the Woods deceitful Wiles.

In the finale, each of them sings a little duet with Alexander, followed by a trio in which now one soprano, now the other has the leading voice, until they join at last in unison.

At a Carnegie Hall performance six years ago, Gianna Rolandi took Cuzzoni's role, and Ashley Putnam took Faustina's. At last month's Concert Royal performance in Merkin Hall, the prima donnas were Christine Brandes and Julianne Baird. Both gave pleasure. Miss Baird has the sweeter timbre, and in the duet's contest of trills she was the clear winner. (Burney reports that Faustina had "so beautiful and quick a shake, that she could put it in motion upon short notice, just when she would.") But her voice did not flow at its freest until she reached the gilded-cage aria, which was captivating. Miss Brandes must work on her trill, but she has excellently definite execution, fleetness, and a keen, clear utterance. Alexander, Senesino's role (with eight arias), was played by the countertenor Drew Minter—no hero in timbre, but an uncommonly eloquent and attractive artist, flexible and sure, with an imaginative control of phrase. Alexander's captains Cleon, Leonatus, and Clitus—alto, tenor, and baritone, with an aria apiece—were sung by Daniel Gundlach (a bright countertenor), Gregory Hostetler, and Christopher Schumann. Taxilis, the Indian king (with two arias) who gains Lisaura's hand when Alexander decides to marry Roxana, was Steven Rickards, yet another fluent countertenor.

"Alessandro" is not undramatic: the two women are strongly characterized; Alexander's own amorous dilemma is counterpointed by his military ambition and by the vanity that causes his captains to conspire against him. The Merkin singers did not have their roles by heart; they remained scorebound, and the dramatic content of the opera, which was conducted from a harpsichord, emphatically, by James Richman, remained unrealized. The evening was less a musical presentation of characters in conflict than a long concert—of delectable music.

—ANDREW PORTER

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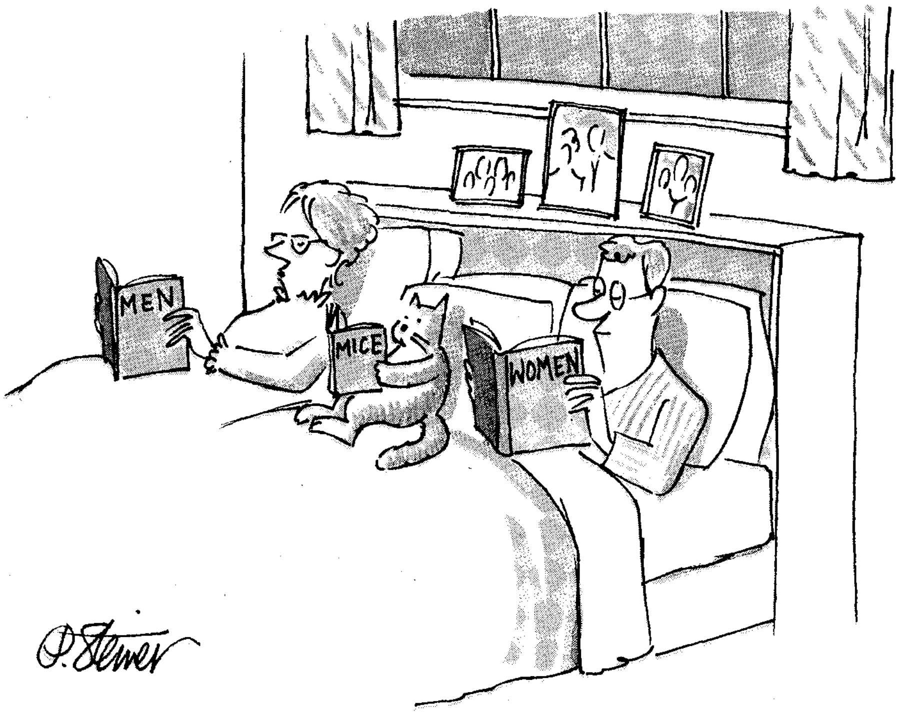
THE THEATRE

Duet

IN "Park Your Car in Harvard Yard," at the Music Box, Israel Horovitz has written not only his best play but a part that is worthy of Jason Robards. The first voice we hear is the wheezing, coughing, gasping one of a radio announcer introducing some classical work, and it continues sporadically throughout as Robards' echo and, in a sense, his double. When the action starts, Mr. Robards is greeting Judith Ivey, his partner for the evening. (It must be said at once that Mr. Horovitz has also written a part that is worthy of Miss Ivey and, come to think of it, a script that is worthy of the blessed Music Box.) Mr. Robards is a retired high-school teacher in Gloucester, Mass., and she is a recent widow who has just come to work as his housekeeper. He, by the way, is white-haired and bearded and stuffed to portliness; she is disguised as a frump. We learn about them as they learn about each other. His subjects were music appreciation and English lit, and he once flunked her husband (who later saved him from drowning) and also her and her parents, making it impossible for any of them to go on to college and a more interesting and prosperous life. The teacher wears a hearing aid that often conks out, and the minute he removes it she switches the radio to rock or pop; cooking a stew in the kitchen, she lists ingredients that would do credit to the witches in "Macbeth"; ironing his shirts, with a leaking iron, she lets a pile of them drop into a puddle of rusty water on the floor. What we are seeing, we soon realize, is acts of vengeance, a few of them passed off as acts of service. As the two grow closer, he tells her about his lifelong competitiveness with a schoolmate, who always scored ahead of him at home, at Harvard, and thereafter—a crippling competitiveness, which made it impossible for him to try his luck in the world and caused him to come home to Gloucester for life. Near the end, remorseful at the harm he has done, the teacher asks how he can redeem himself and gives her a makeup course in music appreciation; she gets a perfect score on the exam. Find out the rest for yourself.

Mr. Horovitz is always in control of his plot—beginning, middle, and end—and his show, which actually runs only an hour and three-quarters, sacrifices no inflection of mood or depth of feeling, while never letting down the comedy. Mr. Robards, the expansive pedagogue, cannot conceal, nor does he try to, his self-disregard and a kind of guilt. Miss Ivey, the clipped New Englander (and protected by that hearing aid), is exactly what she seems to be: deadpan, surprisingly affectionate, and out for blood. Ben Edwards' setting of the teacher's house, in the course of a year, is convincing, too, as lighted by Thomas R. Skelton, and so are Jane Greenwood's costumes.



THE Mabou Mines, those relentless pranksters and demolition experts, are in residence at the Public, smothering Bertolt Brecht's "In the Jungle of Cities" with Halloween greasepaint and other distractions. The script, new to me, about a wicked Malaysian lumber merchant in Chicago in 1912, seems clever enough and resourceful enough, and the playwright's notes on production ought to be inventive enough even for these misguided troupers. Writing an unfavorable notice for any show at the Public is a sad duty right now, but duty it is. "In the Jungle of Cities" is a mess.

—EDITH OLIVER

Casualties

IF there's a rose that grows in no man's land, I'm afraid she's not to be found at the Union Square Theatre, where the Manhattan Theatre Club is presenting "A Piece of My Heart," Shirley Lauro's dreadful docudrama about women in Vietnam and how they got shortchanged because nobody understood or appreciated their suffering. The play, in which four nurses, an Army officer, and a U.S.O. entertainer—Annette Helde, Cynthia Carle, Corliss Preston, Sharon Schlarth, Kim Miyori, and Novella Nelson—stand around talking to the audience, manages to be both inept and exploitative. One by one, the women identify themselves and the naïve dreams or idealistic impulses that took them to Southeast Asia, and we find how those dreams and impulses were betrayed by the horrors of war. Nothing in any of the stories is unfamiliar, nothing is unpredictable. The spectrum of characters echoes the pattern of Second World War movies: instead of the college boy, the bigot, the kid from Brooklyn, et al., we have a débutante, an Army brat, a girl who wants to get out of small-town America, a black, an Asian, and a country-and-Western singer. When minor characters are needed to flesh out a scene, the other actresses join in as extras, while a single actor—Tom Stechschulte—plays "all the American men."

"A Piece of My Heart," which was developed at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, has a lot of plodding staging from Allen R. Belknap, who directed, and a lot of bad regional acting (as opposed to good regional acting, which it hasn't got any of), and a lot of music that is either live and inexplicable ("This Old Man," "Mrs. Robinson," sung by Cynthia Carle accompanying herself on a guitar), or recorded and ferociously ironic (Sousa marches). Even the minimalist, multilevel set designed by James Fenhagen—all bare platforms and bits of bamboo and corrugated iron—is a cliché.

The fact that it's so clear so early on what kind of play this is—the kind in which people tell you what you already know and then act it out for you—makes it a virtual torment to sit through. More than its amateurishness, though, what strikes one about "A Piece of My Heart" is the questionable impulse behind it. Lauro has taken—from Keith Walker's oral history of the same title—stories of unimaginable suffering (they really do tear your heart apart) and has reduced them to dramatic formula. It's something she has done before: her play "Open Admissions," which was based on her experiences as a speech instructor at one of the municipal colleges, had some merit as a modest one-acter performed at Ensemble Studio Theatre, but when she expanded it for Broadway it, too, became meaningless and formulaic; truth had been subjugated to an idea of "drama." At least in that case, though, it was her own story she was messing around with.

—MIMI KRAMER

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ON THIRD THOUGHT DEPT.

[*From the Montreal Gazette*]

A story in *The Gazette* yesterday incorrectly identified a Cree as James Boffish. In fact, his name is James Babbish. In addition, he was described as an elder. In fact, he is too young, but was an acting elder for this occasion.

The Gazette regrets the errors.—*August 16, 1991.*

A correction in *The Gazette* yesterday was itself in error. It gave the name of a Cree who had figured in a story on Thursday as James Babbish.

In fact, his name is James Bobbish.

The Gazette regrets the errors.—*August 17, 1991.*

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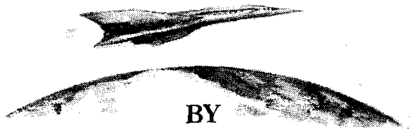

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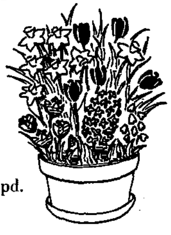

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“HOMICIDE” (Houghton Mifflin; $24.95) is an outsider’s account of a year spent among homicide detectives. The author, David Simon, is a reporter for the Baltimore *Sun*, who after four years on the police beat—when others would have been angling for something more dignified—decided to plunge in deeper. With the Police Department’s consent (and his newspaper’s), he took a leave of absence and became a “police intern,” assigned to the homicide squad for the purpose of writing a book about it. This was a mission so ethically complex that no journalist could have overlooked its hazards—or truly foreseen them. Simon tells us that he started out with a policy of “complete nonintervention” but was soon answering the office phone and editing affidavits; he eventually slid so far from the ideal of journalistic detachment that toward year’s end he found himself searching a suspect to help out a couple of detectives who had their hands full. He reveals all this with more than a touch of embarrassment; in abandoning his vow, however, he seems to have made the most of his opportunity, for his subjects have been at least as reckless as he, confiding a great deal of the accumulated wisdom and lore of a calling with its own tradition of professional reserve. And Simon reports his findings with the feverish air of an explorer who has just reached home port.

There is no balance in these pages: suspects and defense lawyers never get to tell their side of the story. Nor does the book really deliver on the promise of its jittery jacket copy, which suggests a novelistic work built around the personal stories of three detectives, “each driven in his own way to find out how and why the bodies fall.” Simon’s main characters number closer to a dozen, and some of them are a blur. But “Homicide” has its focus elsewhere: it is a landscape rather than a portrait. Simon plants us so close to these men that we see everything—the Police Department, the prosecutors, the courts, the city of Baltimore itself—from their angle. Whatever annoys them annoys us: an assistant district attorney who caves in when a case looks iffy; a Fire Department investigator who creates an unsolved, and unsolvable, murder by leaping to a judgment of arson when the evidence screams electrical short; a uniformed cop—a “uniform,” in detectives’ parlance—who picks up a knife that has been carefully left undisturbed and hands it to a homicide cop, saying, “I found this in the bedroom. Is it important?”; a black defense lawyer who plays on the worst sort of racial ill-feeling by indicating the color of her own skin as she tells an all-black jury, “Brothers and sisters, I think we all know what this case is about.”

Simon’s commitment to his detectives—to understanding their experiences, insights, and grievances—is total. Outside the perimeter of the homicide squad lies a world full of stupidity and depravity; inside, there is only the occasional error in judgment. And yet, having seen so much of these men, he presents a far less orderly and scientific—and more believable—picture of their craft than that conveyed by the great mass of books about murder investigations, including those that have made a to-do about authenticity. By rights, we ought to know the homicide detective’s job inside out. But who would have suspected that it is often impossible to fix a time of death within a range of less than twelve hours (“Coroners capable of telling Kojak that his victim stopped breathing between 10:30 and 10:45 are always a source of amusement for cops slumped in front of the tube on a slow nightshift,” Simon writes), that ballistics people are commonly unable to trace a particular bullet to a particular weapon, or that only a small percent-

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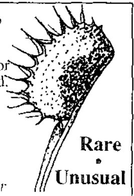

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age of crime scenes yield hairs, fibres, or fingerprints? Or that—in Baltimore, at least—fingerprint experts are routinely called into court to explain the *absence* of prints to jurors who have been conditioned by TV to expect them "on every door handle, window, and house key"?

Simon's narrative touches on several dozen of the two hundred and thirty-four homicides recorded in Baltimore in 1988, the year of his observations. Some are what the detectives call "whodunits," and some are "dunkers"—cases that virtually solve themselves. Some are "red balls"—they have the whole city agitated—and some (if there's a name for them, Simon fails to mention it) are murders that seem to hold no interest for anyone but the detective who, being next up, gets the assignment. Since physical evidence is generally scarce, success tends to turn on a detective's ability to find witnesses and get them to talk—an enterprise often complicated by the fact that the witnesses and the suspects are the same people. One detective, Sergeant Jay Landsman, likes to plunge into an interrogation declared hopeless by others and rant, rave, and accuse his way to a closed case. We are told of "nights when Landsman . . . shouted his throat raw, accusing three separate suspects in three separate rooms of murdering the same man, then offering two an apology an hour later while handcuffing the third." Some of Landsman's colleagues are offended by his helter-skelter style of questioning, but they, too, go about their work in a surprisingly loose and improvisational fashion. In "Homicide," murders are declared solved on the strength of evidence that would seem woefully slight on "Columbo" or "L.A. Law." The question of motive—the preoccupation of countless mystery novels—is sometimes not addressed at all; these detectives figure that if the motive isn't obvious it's probably unimportant. They have a saying: "Fuck the why. Find out the how, and nine times out of ten it'll give you the who." Juries "have a hard time when a detective takes the stand and declares he has no idea why Tater shot Pee Wee in the back five times, and frankly, he could care less," Simon writes, but "Pee Wee isn't around to discuss it, and our man Tater doesn't want to say."

To make himself as unthreatening as possible to his subjects, Simon got

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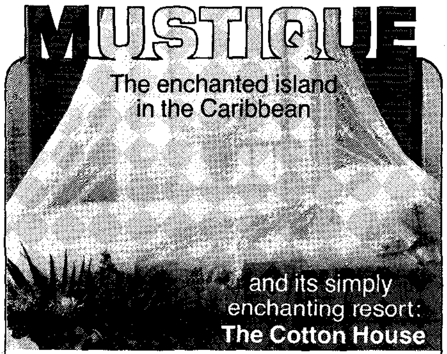

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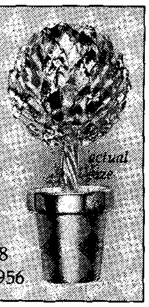

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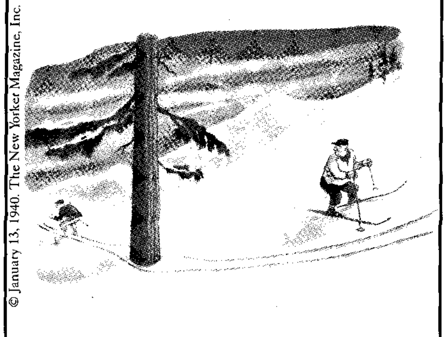

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a haircut, abandoned a diamond-stud earring, and took to wearing sports jackets and ties. On the back cover of his book, we see the result: a close-cropped, thick-torsoed figure who could certainly pass for a cop. (Friends from his diamond-earring days must have been concerned.) In the ways that really count, however, this is the work of a writer who kept his wits about him. Free of the mannerisms of police books, it also avoids those of the big, commercially minded journalistic books that over the last decade or so have beckoned readers into the inner chambers of Hollywood, Wall Street, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other exclusive habitats. Like them, "Homicide" has a fly-on-the-wall quality at times, but Simon really was a fly on the wall—as much as any writer could be. Even so, he never subjects the reader to the sort of undigested chatter that occasionally passes for reporting these days; there are no scenes here whose appeal rests on a sense of violated privacy. And when Simon is conveying information that came to him indirectly he says so and never pretends to know more than he does. In short, his book recalls a time when nonfiction could look at fiction without getting its nose out of joint.

HAVING shown such restraint in his handling of facts, Simon feels no need, as a narrator, to resort to the feigned neutrality—the nodding analyst's tone—with which some writers of nonfiction have attempted to camouflage their excesses. As a storyteller, he is careful to define the limits of his knowledge; as an interpreter and commentator, his voice is full-throated and unapologetic. Baltimore juries "do not like to think," he writes, and they have been known to swallow some cockeyed defenses. He cites the example of a multiple-stabbing case in which the jury convicted the defendant of assault with intent to murder but acquitted him of the actual murder because no eyewitness had recalled the blow deemed fatal by the medical examiner—although there was no suggestion that anyone else had participated in the attack. Another defendant seems to have got off by saying that his confession was beaten out of him; the jury, according to Simon, reasoned that no one in his right mind would confess if he hadn't been beaten.

This is, of course, not an altogether

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illogical conclusion, silence almost always being a suspect's best policy. It has been the law of the land since 1966, when the Supreme Court decided Miranda v. Arizona, that a suspect must be offered the chance to see a lawyer before an interrogation begins; and the first thing that even the worst lawyer will say is "Don't talk." So a layperson might be forgiven for assuming what many law-and-order types predicted—that in the post-Miranda world confessions would be virtually impossible to obtain by legal means. But, as Simon explains in one of the best parts of this very good book, the law merely instructs the police to make the offer; nothing requires them to present it straightforwardly, prominently, or attractively. If an interrogation goes well, the reading of rights is a brief digression in a protracted monologue intended to mesmerize the suspect into confessing—and congratulating himself on his good sense in doing so. The detective does not use the term "confess," however, nor does he speak of "murder," except to describe what the suspect will certainly be charged with, and convicted of, if he is so dumb as to exercise his constitutional rights ("Once you up and call for that lawyer, son, we can't do a thing for you"). The aim is to demonstrate that the basic facts of the case are not in dispute ("I got three witnesses in three other rooms who say you're my man. I got a knife from the scene that's going downstairs to the lab for latent prints. I got blood spatter on them Air Jordans we took off you ten minutes ago . . . and I think we both know whose blood type it's gonna be"), and that if there are any mitigating circumstances—details that might make the electric chair, or life in the penitentiary, inappropriate—they had better be placed on the record forthwith.

If the suspect can think of none, the detective supplies them. "He came at you, right? You were scared. It was self-defense."

"Yeah, he came at me," the suspect may agree. Before he can get another word out, the detective waves him off, saying, "If we're gonna to do this, I gotta find your rights form. Where's the fucking form? Damn things are like cops, never around when you need 'em." In short order, the form—actually a *relinquishment*-of-rights form—will surface, the suspect will sign it, and he will proceed to give a

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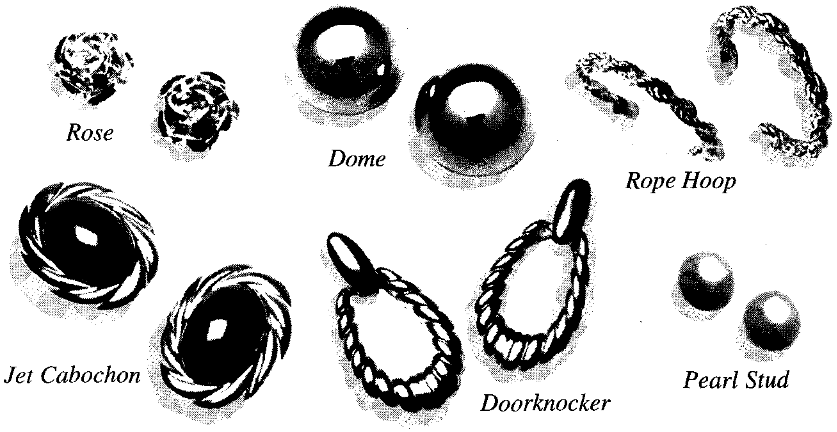

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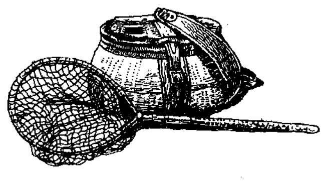

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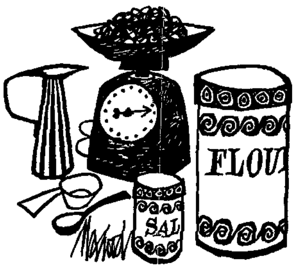
statement in which he acknowledges being at the scene, wielding the murder weapon, and striking the fatal blow, to a detective who had no way of proving any of these things.

"Miranda and its accompanying decisions established a uniform concept of a criminal defendant's rights and effectively ended the use of violence and the most blatant kind of physical intimidation in interrogations," Simon observes. He goes on to say:

> That, of course, was a blessing. But if the further intent of the Miranda decision was, in fact, an attempt to "dispel the compelling atmosphere" of an interrogation, then it failed miserably. . . . With rare exceptions, a confession is compelled, provoked and manipulated from a suspect. . . . That is the essence of interrogation, and those who believe that a straightforward conversation between a cop and a criminal—devoid of any treachery—is going to solve a crime are somewhere beyond naïve.

A great deal has been written about Miranda and the other landmark decisions in which the Supreme Court, in the Earl Warren years, clarified and expanded suspects' rights. Much of this commentary has been the work of people far less well disposed toward the police than Simon, yet it has often suited civil libertarians as well as police buffs to overstate the Court's demands upon the police. If the justices had wished to purge the interrogation process of duplicity as well as brutality, Simon points out, they could have simply ordered that a lawyer always be present. "But such a blanket guarantee of individual rights would effectively end the use of interrogation as an investigative weapon," he adds, "leaving many more crimes unsolved and many more guilty men and women unpunished." To Simon the idealistic language of Miranda and the sneaky language of homicide cops in an interrogation room are two parts of a single package: they add up to an effort to give suspects something like the level of protection that American society wants them to enjoy.



Simon devotes what a defense lawyer would probably consider a brisk paragraph to the stories of three innocent men who were charged with murder and later exonerated. He dismisses as "minimal"—at least, in Baltimore—the danger that such a person might actually be convicted or do serious time. He does not pause to consider any indirect or subtle consequences of the kind of trickery he describes, such as the degree to which it encourages disdain for the law and its enforcers, not only among criminals but among the many other people who pass through the system as suspects or hostile witnesses. Nor does it occur to Simon to draw a connection between the deceit he forgives among detectives and the distrust he deplores among jurors. It is equally true, however, that other writers have tended to examine these issues without considering, as Simon does, the effect of police chicanery on the police themselves. He can't help noticing that lawyers—the designers of the legal system—sail through the process with their "cuffs clean," while detectives come under constant pressure to lie and conceal, not only when they are questioning suspects but when they are testifying in court. A homicide cop will proudly describe a particularly sweet interrogation for his co-workers (or for a writer he can trust to handle the story with discretion), but he is not likely to recount such a tale on the witness stand. In reply to the question "Did my client ask for a lawyer?," he will resist the temptation to grin and explain that the client requested a lawyer on five separate occasions before thinking better of the idea. In all probability, he will keep a straight face and answer, "No, he did not," having accurately surmised that this is what the court wants to hear.

The strange business of "granting rights to a man who will then be tricked into relinquishing them" is only one of the aspects of the job that homicide cops learn to be guarded about. Like all cops, they know that there is a world of people out there who stand ready to seize on the smallest acknowledgment of ambiguity as a point of attack. Yet they also have the comfort of knowing that the secrets of their trade are concerned, by and large, with getting a job done. Theirs is one domain in which the police come close to fulfilling the public's hopes. Most killers are caught, many are convicted (often after full-blown trials rather than plea bargains), and quite a few wind up in prison for extended periods of time. Murderers account for eleven

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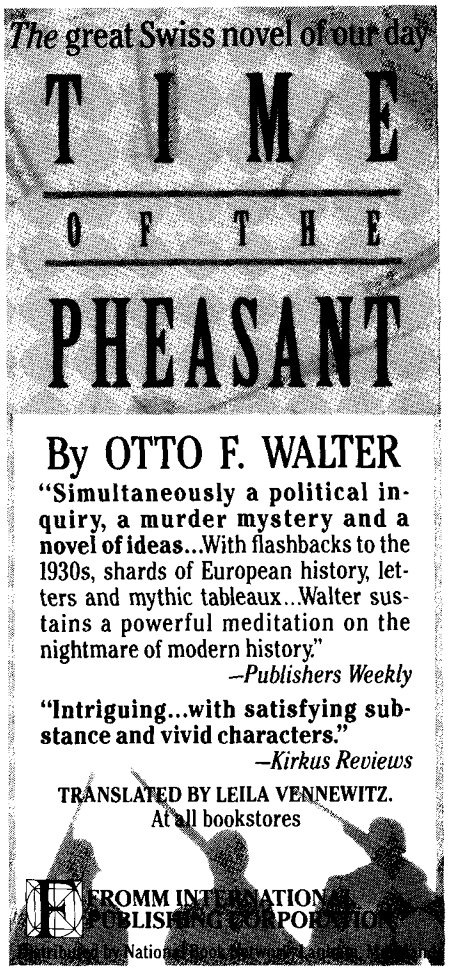
per cent of the prison population in the United States, which has surged ahead of South Africa and the Soviet Union as the nation with the highest proportion of its people (about one in two hundred) behind bars. When homicide cops go out drinking, it is sometimes to celebrate, not just to wind down and forget.

FOR some years, though, murders have been getting harder to solve. A generation ago, the national clearance rate for homicide cases was over ninety per cent. By the late nineteen-eighties, it was down around seventy per cent, and after the first two months of 1988 Baltimore had a rate of under thirty-six per cent. This chilling statistic threatened detectives'—and supervisors'—jobs and highlighted some vexing long-term trends: the rising proportion of cases in which killer and victim are unacquainted; the increased number of killings that involve drug dealers (a group of young men disinclined to talk to the police and willing to terrorize those who do); and the growing reticence of witnesses generally. In Baltimore, Simon writes, the prevailing attitude is getting to be that a person needs a reason to *give* information, rather than to withhold it.

One of the red-ball cases Simon recounts is that of Miss Geraldine Parrish, an unprepossessing lay preacher of fifty-five, who was eventually convicted of four murders and sentenced to life in prison. For more than a decade, she had been taking out insurance policies on people—mainly her husbands, but also other relatives, friends, neighbors, and tenants—and then making arrangements to have them killed. A number of people outside her family, in addition to almost everyone in it (including a niece who had survived three attempts on her life), turned out to have had a pretty good idea what she was up to, but no one had seen fit to call the police. Miss Geraldine's exploits came to light only when a friend of her contract killer's was indicted for murder and felt a need to bargain with the D.A.'s office. For Detective Donald Waltemeyer, who oversaw the investigation, it was the case of a lifetime, but Simon suggests that it was not as satisfying as the case of a lifetime ought to be. As the inquiry proceeded, the tally of actual and intended victims mounted, and Waltemeyer decided to dig up some



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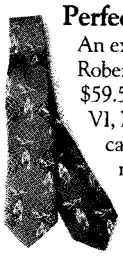

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paupers' graves for confirming evidence, only to discover that the bodies weren't in their assigned places: the cemetery manager had been throwing them into a mass grave, conveniently located on a site that a backhoe could safely slip in and out of. Waltemeyer was forced to give up on one victim, who simply couldn't be found.

One of Simon's favorite detectives, Donald Worden, is a legendary figure in the Baltimore P.D., renowned for his extraordinary memory and round-bellied charm. Simon introduces us to Worden at a difficult stage of his career, when he has become fed up with the politically sensitive case of a young man apparently killed by one of a group of cops who chased him from a stolen car. The cops all say they saw nothing, and the local community is just as unhelpful; nobody, Worden concludes, wants to be the first to step forward in such a volatile affair. It's not Worden's idea of a homicide investigation, and as it meanders on (the case was never solved) he grows more and more disenchanted.

Worden harks back to a time when "a rough cordiality still existed among the players" and he "was on a first-name basis with anyone in the district who was worth arresting." But it is hard to see how a cop could know everyone worth arresting in some of the inner-city neighborhoods of the nineteen-eighties and nineties—in the Reservoir Hill section of Baltimore, for example, where the body of Latonya Wallace, an eleven-year-old girl, was found dumped in an alley in February of 1988. A computer check of the residents in the immediate vicinity produced more than two dozen names with multiple-page police records, out of four dozen names in all. "Armed robbery, assault with intent, rape, theft, deadly weapon—in terms of criminal endeavor, there seem to be few virgins left on Reservoir Hill," Simon comments. Six of the males in this group, astonishingly, had been arrested for at least one sex offense. "That's a lot of perverts for one city block," Tom Pellegrini, the lead investigator on the case, observed. "Yeah, there must be some kinda special zoning up there," another detective agreed. Witnesses tend to be unusually forthcoming when the victim is a child, Simon tells us, and the Latonya Wallace murder received the full red-ball treatment. "This one'll go down," Sergeant Landsman predicted. But, sadly, it never did, and as the prognosis grew less hopeful the appeal of the job began to fade for Detective Pellegrini, as it had faded for Detective Worden.

"Homicide" is a long book, and the sense of resolution that Simon brings to its final pages is mainly calendrical. Perhaps he admires these men too much to acknowledge the uncomfortable conclusion that his narrative seems to have been leading to: that, despite their best efforts, homicide work is becoming more like big-city policing in general—a field increasingly plagued (for all the attention justly paid to stories of brutality, harassment, and other forms of excess) by bureaucratic torpor and a sense of futility. The year and the book end with the clearance rate back up in the respectable seventies, with several detectives apparently riding high again, and with the reader feeling greatly illuminated but far from reassured.

—JAMES LARDNER

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

CITY OF THE MIND, by Penelope Lively (HarperCollins; $20). What is apparently a novel about a newly single architect is, on closer inspection, a meditation on London, past and present. In between Matthew Halland's appointments with contractors, weekend visits with his young daughter, Jane, and matter-of-fact bedroom meetings with an old friend of his estranged wife's, fragments of other London lives crop up. Intermittently, we enter the thoughts of a sixteenth-century British explorer of the Arctic, a nineteenth-century street urchin, a Victorian paleontologist, a stalwart rescue worker during the London blitz. These presences render Matthew's ordinary world more menacing or more sane by comparison, but they crowd his place at the center of the book. Ms. Lively has always been especially dexterous with characters in transition, so the reader can't help wishing for more about Matthew's second chance at first love, which comes too late in the book for full development, and about the outcome of eight-year-old Jane's resolution to remain loyal to both her parents. It is peculiar to know the place of this appealing father and daughter in the historical panorama but not to know *them* as well as we would like.

SARAH CANARY, by Karen Joy Fowler (Holt; $21.95). Queer, bright, and poetic, this revisionist view of America's West Coast in the nineteenth century is a sad comedy of misunderstanding and misperception: of one race by another; of the sane by the mad, and vice versa; and, most pervasively, of women by men. The foremost object of misperception is a woman labelled Sarah Canary, who functions virtually as a Rorschach test. She is discovered in the woods by a kindly Chinese railway worker named Chin, who at first takes her to be a ghost. He quickly revises his judgment, however, and resigns himself to transporting the lost female to the nearest insane asylum, where the resident doctor decides she is the murdering type. Chin rescues her again, and winds up with a sweet male loony in tow as well. A sinister entrepreneur makes off with Sarah Canary to display her as a "wild woman" raised by animals, and while Chin attempts to rescue her yet again a feminist lecturer interferes. Though this novel is very much about history and ideas, Chin's valiance and nobility make it unexpectedly moving.

GENERAL

DEN OF THIEVES, by James B. Stewart (Simon & Schuster; $25). A fascinating account of the financial scandals that culminated in 1990 with a ten-year prison sentence for the junk-bond impresario Michael Milken. The book starts out in the nineteen-seventies, introducing the men, several just beginning their Wall Street careers, whose greed—or, in a very few cases, pathetic good nature—eventually entangled them in illicit schemes. The author, a *Wall Street Journal* editor, blends narration and exposition so that we can follow the intricacies of finance and financial law without effort. As his tale of crime and punishment unfolds, readers may recognize stories—about, for example, the worthy enterprises rescued by junk bonds—that appeared in the media; these turn out to have been part of Milken's enormous public-relations campaign. In reality, high yield means high risk,

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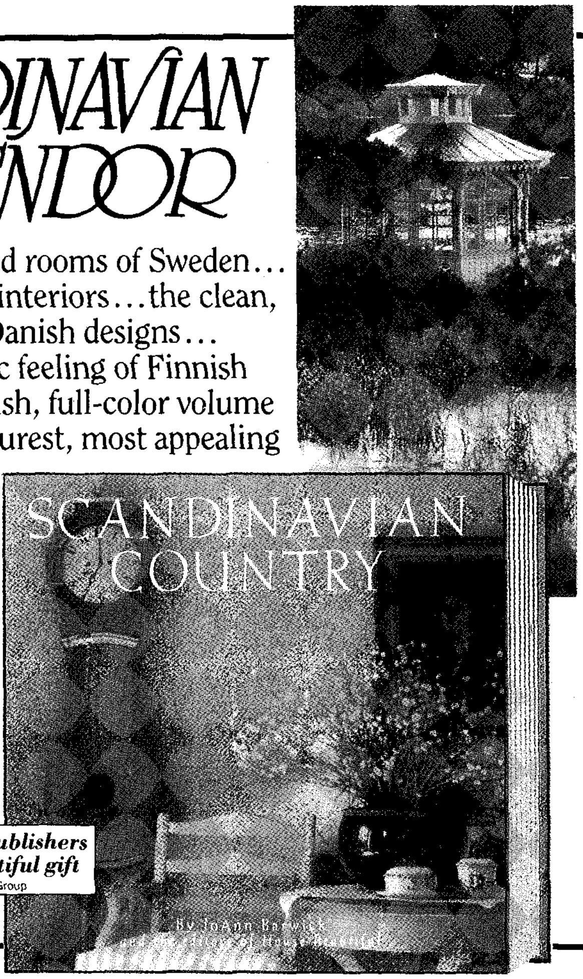

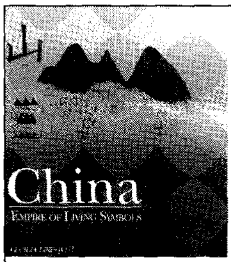

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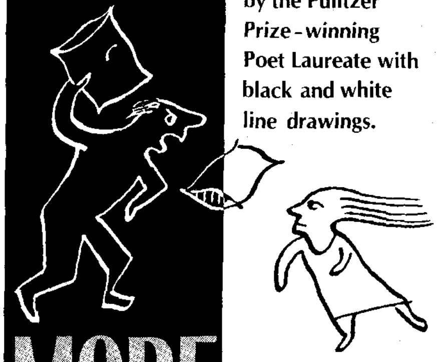

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as is now evident from the wreck of innumerable companies that issued or bought junk bonds. In the nineteen-eighties, many of the criminals were presented as geniuses who earned their immoderate takings by sheer acumen; the fact is that they weren't just smart, they were dishonest, too.

Red Storm on the Reich: The Soviet March on Germany, 1945, by Christopher Duffy (Atheneum; $27.50). This splendid military chronicle records the final act in history's bloodiest theatre of war, the Eastern Front. Mr. Duffy has read widely in German and Soviet accounts of the events he covers, and he constructs a many-sided narrative, stretching from the broadest outlines of the war to individual incidents. The final Soviet offensive began in January, 1945, with armored spearheads pushing far to the German rear, but the initial advance slowed as soldiers broke ranks to loot, rape, and murder. These atrocities stiffened German resistance, and allowed Allied forces on the Western Front to push farther into Germany than they would have if the Soviet advance hadn't stalled, with profound consequences for the shape of postwar Europe.

Koop: The Memoirs of America's Family Doctor, by C. Everett Koop (Random House; $22.50). After amicably recounting an unexceptional Brooklyn boyhood, college days at Dartmouth, medical school, and ascendancy in his profession as chief surgeon at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, the author gets to the heart of his book: his eight-year tenure as the Reagan Administration's Surgeon General. Beginning with the nine-month ordeal of his confirmation, he embarks on a thorough account of our public health-care system (which he claims is "dysfunctional") and of his stubborn, often frustrated fight to alert Americans to two mortal dangers—tobacco smoke and the AIDS virus. Dr. Koop looks back on his long battle against the tobacco industry and its paid hands in advertising and politics, and records his contempt for its cynicism and greed, as expressed by a congressman from a tobacco state: "I don't give a good goddamn how many people die of cancer or anything else that you say

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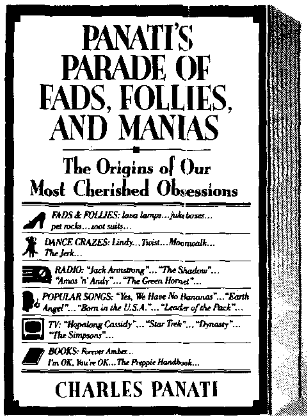

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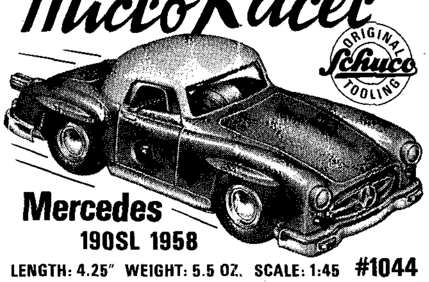

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is associated with tobacco. All I want is jobs and prosperity for constituents in my district." Until Reagan's second term, Dr. Koop says, he was forbidden by the White House to mention AIDS; he tells of his gradual success in instigating programs to educate a seemingly indifferent public about the most serious epidemic our society has ever faced.

THE LADY AND THE MONK: FOUR SEASONS IN KYOTO, by Pico Iyer (Knopf; $22). Another cross-cultural adventure by the author of the memorable "Video Night in Kathmandu." This one centers on the ancient and still beautiful Japanese city of Kyoto, where Mr. Iyer went with the aim of learning more about both Zen Buddhism and Japanese culture. He is a sharp-eyed and thoughtful observer, and he is successful in evoking the life of Kyoto's malls, temples, and back streets; moonlit nights on the water; and the vulgarity of the Westernized nightclub and amusement quarter. But what really brings his book to life is an enchanting young Kyoto housewife named Sachiko, whom he got to know early in his stay. Sachiko-san is the wife of a "salaryman," who spends all his time at the office. She speaks an English of her own devising, reads Goethe, Baudelaire, and the Japanese classics, and likes Sting, Beethoven, and Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." She stays with us throughout the book, and we watch her and listen to her as she becomes one of what the author assures us is a growing number of young Japanese women who are escaping the trap of tradition.

THE JEW ACCUSED: THREE ANTI-SEMITIC AFFAIRS (DREYFUS, BEILIS, FRANK) 1894-1915, by Albert S. Lindemann (Cambridge; $27.95). This scholarly volume, packed with fact and thought, examines three trials in which Jewish defendants were wrongly accused: Alfred Dreyfus of treason, in France; Mendel Beilis of murdering a child to collect Christian blood for Jewish ritual purposes, in Kiev; and Leo Frank of murdering a teen-age girl, in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Lindemann's intention is to explore modern anti-Semitism and to describe its sources, its subtleties, and its effects in three different societies. A Russian jury, for example, believed that ritual murder had been committed but found Beilis innocent. In the case of Frank, who was taken from prison and lynched, the populist leader Tom Watson attacked him as a Jew, but for Watson, as for his followers, the principal issue was rich against poor. Throughout the book, Mr. Lindemann, making use of contemporary documents, provides a vivid sense of people and of the period.

ON THE ALTAR OF FREEDOM: A BLACK SOLDIER'S CIVIL WAR LETTERS FROM THE FRONT, by Corporal James Henry Gooding, edited by Virginia Matzke Adams (Massachusetts; $21.95). James Henry Gooding, a seaman, was the eighth man in New Bedford, Massachusetts, to enlist in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, one of the first black regiments raised in the North during the Civil War. From March, 1863, through February, 1864, he served as correspondent from the 54th to the New Bedford *Mercury*. This collection includes forty-eight of his letters to the paper, along with correspondence regarding the issue of equal pay for black soldiers and some sentimental early poetry by him. Gooding took part in the celebrated assault on Fort Wagner, was wounded and captured in battle at Olustee, Florida—another ill-fated Union venture, in which the 54th fought with uncommon valor—and died in July, 1864, in Andersonville Prison. The constraints of military secrecy made him more of an editorialist than a reporter, but the role suited him; he was well read—allusions range from classical antiquity to Dickens—and a shrewd, witty, and opinionated observer of military life and the conduct of the war.

NOTE: "The Journals of John Cheever" has been published by Knopf ($25). Most of the contents originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. . . . "American Stories," by Calvin Trillin, has been published by Ticknor & Fields ($19.95). All the contents first appeared here.

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Ex-female colleagues defend Thomas. Story/A4—*San Bernardino County (Calif.) Sun.*

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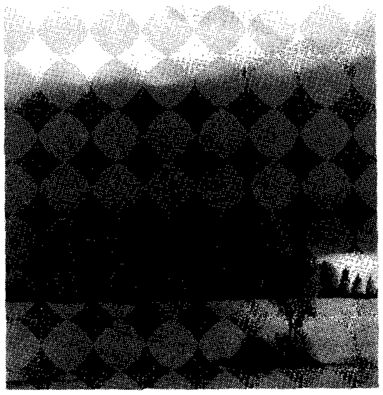

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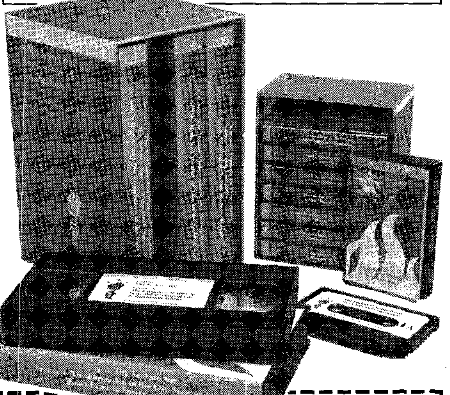

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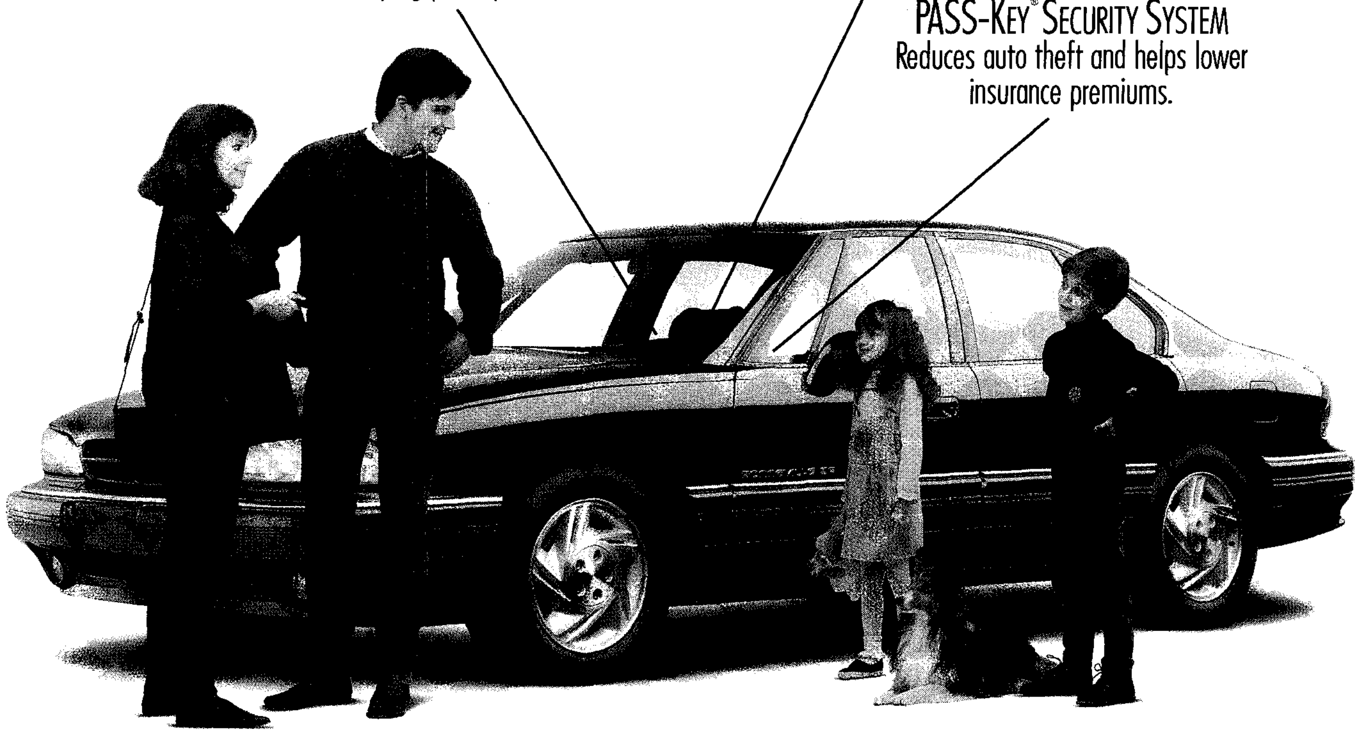

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